THE

POEMS

OF

OSSIAN.

TRANSLATED

By JAMES MACPHERSON, Esq.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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SECOND VOLUME.

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Cairbar, the son of Borbar-duthul, lord of Atha in Connaught, the most potent chief of the race of the Fir-bolg, having murdered, at Temora the royal palace, Cormac the son of Artho, the young king of Ireland, usurped the throne. Cormac was lineally descended from Conar the son of Trenmor, the great grandfather of Fingal, king of those Caledonians who inhabited the western coast of Scotland. Fingal resented the behaviour of Cairbar, and resolved to pass over into Ireland with an army, to re-establish the royal family on the Irish throne. Early intelligence of his designs coming to Cairbar, he assembled some of his tribes in Ulster, and at the same time ordered his brother Cathmor to follow him speedily with an army, from Temora. Such was the situation of affairs when the Caledonian invaders appeared on the coast of Ulster.

The poem opens in the morning. Cairbar is represented as retired from the rest of the army, when one of his scouts brought him news of the landing of Fingal. He assembles a council of his chiefs. Foldath the chief of Moma haughtily despises the enemy; and is reprimanded warmly by Malthos. Cairbar, after hearing their debate, orders a feast to be prepared, to which, by his bard Olla, he invites Oscar the son of Ossian; resolving to pick a quarrel with that hero, and so have some pretext for killing him. Oscar came to the feast; the quarrel happened; the followers of both fought, and Cairbar and Oscar fell by mutual wounds. The noise of the battle reached Fingal's army. The king came on, to the relief of Oscar, and the Irish fell back to the army of Cathmor, who was advanced to the banks of the river Lubar, on the heath of Moi-lena. Fingal, after mourning over his grandson, ordered Ullin the chief of his bards to carry his body to Morven, to be there interred. Night coming on, Althan, the son of Conachar, relates to the king the particulars of the murder of Cormac. Fillan, the son of Fingal, is sent to observe the motions of Cathmar by night, which concludes the action of the first day. The scene of this book is a plain, near the hill of Mora, which rose on the borders of the heath of Moi-lena, in Ulster.



T E M O R A:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK I.

THE blue waves of Erin roll in light. The mountains are covered with day. Trees ſhare their duſky heads, in the breeze. Grey torrents pour their noiſy ſtreams. Two green hills, with aged oaks, ſurround a narrow plain. The blue courſe of a ſtream is there. On its banks ſtood Cairbar * of Atha. His ſpear ſupports the king: the red eye of his fear is ſad. Cormac riſes in his ſoul, with all his ghaſtly wounds. The grey form of the youth appears in darkneſs. Blood pours from his airy ſide. Cairbar thrice threw his ſpear on earth.

* Cairbar, the ſon of Borbar-duthul, was deſcended lineally from Lathon the chief of the Fir-bolg, the firſt colony who ſettled in the ſouth of Ireland. The Cael were in poſſeſſion of the northern coaſt of that kingdom, and the firſt monarchs of Ireland were of their race. Hence aroſe thoſe differences between the two nations, which terminated, at laſt, in the murder of Cormac, and the uſurpation of Cairbar, lord of Atha, who is mentioned in this place.

earth. Thrice he ſtroaked his bread. His ſteps are ſhort. He often ſtops. He toſſes his ſinewy arms. He is like a cloud in the deſert, varying its form to every blaſt. The valleys are ſad around, and fear, by turns, the ſhower! The king, at length, reſumed his ſoul. He took his pointed ſpear. He turned his eye to Moi-lena. The ſcouts of blue ocean came. They came with ſteps of fear, and often looked behind. Cairbar knew that the mighty were near! He called his gloomy chiefs.

The ſounding ſteps of his warriors came. They drew, at once, their ſwords. There Morlath* ſtood with darkened face. Hidalla's long hair ſighs in the wind. Red-haired Cormar bends on his ſpear, and rolls his ſide-long-looking eyes. Wild is the look of Malthos from beneath two ſhaggy brows. Foldath ſtands, like an oozy rock, that covers its dark ſides with foam. His ſpear is like Slimora's fir, that meets the wind of heaven. His ſhield is marked with the ſtrokes of battle. His red eye deſpiſes danger. Theſe and a

* Mór-lath, *great in the day of battle.* Hidalla', *mildly looking hero.* Cor-mar, *expert at ſea.* Málth-os, *ſlow to ſpeak.* Foldath, *generous.*

Foldath, who is here ſtrongly marked, makes a great figure in the ſequel of the poem His fierce, uncomplying character is ſuſtained throughout. He ſeems, from a paſſage in the ſecond book, to have been Cairbar's greateſt confident, and to have had a principal hand in the conſpiracy againſt Cormac king of Ireland. His tribe was one of the moſt conſiderable of the race of the Fir-bolg.

thouſand

thousand other chiefs surrounded the king of Erin, when the scout of ocean came, Mor-annal *, from streamy Moi-lena. His eyes hang forward from his face. His lips trembling pale!

"Do the chiefs of Erin stand," he said, "silent as the grove of evening? Stand they, like a silent wood, and Fingal on the coast? Fingal, who is terrible in battle, the king of streamy Morven!" "Hast thou seen the warrior?" said Cairbar with a sigh. "Are his heroes many on the coast? Lifts he the spear of battle? Or comes the king in peace?" "In peace he comes not, king of Erin! I have seen his forward spear †. It is a meteor of death. The blood of thousands is on its steel. He came first to the shore, strong in the grey hair of age. Full rose his sinewy limbs, as he strode in his might. That sword is by his side, which gives no second ‡ wound.

* Mór-annal, *strong breath*; a very proper name for a scout.

† Mor-annal here alludes to the particular appearance of Fingal's spear. If a man upon his first landing in a strange country, kept the point of his spear forward, it denoted in those days that he came in a hostile manner, and accordingly he was treated as an enemy; if he kept the point behind him, it was a token of friendship, and he was immediately invited to the feast, according to the hospitality of the times.

‡ This was the famous sword of Fingal, made by Luno, a smith of Lochlin, and after him poetically called the *son of Luno*: it is said of this sword, that it killed a man at every stroke; and that Fingal never used it but in times of the greatest danger.

His ſhield is terrible, like the bloody moon, aſcending through a ſtorm. Then came Oſſian, king of ſongs. Then Morni's ſon, the firſt of men. Connal leaps forward on his ſpear. Dermid ſpreads his dark-brown locks. Fillan bends his bow, the young hunter of ſtreamy Moruth. But who is that before them, like the terrible courſe of a ſtream! It is the ſon of Oſſian, bright between his locks! His long hair falls on his back. His dark brows are half-incloſed in ſteel. His ſword hangs looſe on his ſide. His ſpear glitters as he moves. I fled from his terrible eyes, king of high Temora!"

"Then fly, thou feeble man," ſaid Foldath's gloomy wrath. "Fly to the grey ſtreams of thy land, ſon of the little ſoul! Have not I ſeen that Oſcar? I beheld the chief in war. He is of the mighty in danger: but there are others who lift the ſpear. Erin has many ſons as brave, king of Temora of groves! Let Foldath meet him in his ſtrength. Let me ſtop this mighty ſtream. My ſpear is covered with blood. My ſhield is like the wall of Tura!"

"Shall Foldath * alone meet the foe?" replied the dark-browned Malthos. "Are they not on our coaſt, like the waters of many

* The oppoſite characters of Foldath and Malthos are ſtrongly marked in ſubſequent parts of the poem. They appear always in oppoſition. The feuds between their families, which were the ſource of their hatred to one another, are mentioned in other poems.

ſtreams?

ſtreams? Are not theſe the chiefs, who vanquiſhed Swaran, when the ſons of green Erin fled? Shall Foldath meet their braveſt hero? Foldath of the heart of pride! take the ſtrength of the people! and let Malthos come. My ſword is red with ſlaughter, but who has heard my words *?"

"Sons of green Erin," ſaid Hidalla †, "let not Fingal hear your words. The foe might rejoice, and his arm be ſtrong in the land. Ye are brave, O warriors! Ye are tempeſts in war. Ye are like ſtorms, which meet the rocks without fear, and overturn the woods. But let us move in our ſtrength, ſlow as a gathered cloud! Then ſhall the mighty tremble; the ſpear ſhall fall from the hand of the valiant. We ſee the cloud of death, they will ſay, while ſhadows fly over their face. Fingal will mourn in his age. He ſhall behold his flying fame. The ſteps of his chiefs will ceaſe in Morven. The moſs of years ſhall grow in Selma."

Cairbar heard their words, in ſilence, like the cloud of a ſhower: it ſtands dark on Cromla, till the lightning burſts its ſide. The valley gleams with heaven's flame; the ſpirits of the ſtorm rejoice. So ſtood the ſilent king

* That is, who has heard my vaunting? He intended the expreſſion as a rebuke to the ſelf-praiſe of Foldath.

† Hidalla was the chief of Clonra, a ſmall diſtrict on the banks of the lake of Lego. The beauty of his perſon, his eloquence and genius for poetry, are afterwards mentioned.

of Temora; at length his words broke forth. "Spread the feaſt on Moi-lena. Let my hundred bards attend. Thou red-haired Olla, take the harp of the king. Go to Oſcar chief of ſwords. Bid Oſcar to our joy. To-day we feaſt and hear the ſong: to-morrow break the ſpears! Tell him that I have raiſed the tomb of Cathol *; that bards gave his friend to the winds. Tell him that Cairbar has heard of his fame, at the ſtream of reſounding Carun †. Cathmor ‡ my brother is not here. He

* Cathol the ſon of Maronnan, or Moran, was murdered by Cairbar, for his attachment to the family of Cormac. He had attended Oſcar to the *war of Inis-thona*, where they contracted a great friendſhip for one another. Oſcar, immediately after the death of Cathol, had ſent a formal challenge to Cairbar, which he prudently declined, but conceived a ſecret hatred againſt Oſcar, and had beforehand contrived to kill him at the feaſt, to which he here invites him.

† He alludes to the battle of Oſcar againſt Caros, *king of ſhips*; who is ſuppoſed to be the ſame with Carauſius the uſurper.

‡ Cathmor, *great in battle*, the ſon of Borbar-duthul, and brother of Cairbar king of Ireland, had, before the inſurrection of the Fir-bolg, paſſed over into Inis-huna, ſuppoſed to be a part of South Britain, to aſſiſt Conmor king of that place againſt his enemies. Cathmor was ſucceſsful in the war, but, in the courſe of it, Conmor was either killed, or died a natural death. Cairbar, upon intelligence of the deſigns of Fingal to dethrone him, had diſpatched a meſſenger for Cathmor, who returned into Ireland a few days before the opening of the poem.

Cairbar here takes advantage of his brother's abſence, to perpetuate his ungenerous deſigns againſt Oſcar; for the noble ſpirit of Cathmor, had he been preſent, would not have permitted the laws of that hoſpitality, for which he

He is not here with his thouſands, and our arms are weak. Cathmor is a foe to ſtrife at the feaſt! His ſoul is bright as that ſun! But Cairbar muſt fight with Oſcar, chiefs of woody Temora! His words for Carthol were many: the wrath of Cairbar burns. He ſhall fall on Moi-lena. My fame ſhall riſe in blood."

Their faces brightened round with joy. They ſpread over Moi-lena. The feaſt of ſhells is prepared. The ſongs of bards ariſe. The chiefs of Selma heard their joy *. We thought

he was ſo renowned himſelf, to be violated. The brothers form a contraſt: we do not deteſt the mean ſoul of Cairbar more than we admire the diſintereſted and generous mind of Cathmor.

* Fingal's army heard the joy that was in Cairbar's camp. The character given of Cathmor is agreeable to the times. Some, through oſtentation, were hoſpitable; and others fell naturally into a cuſtom handed down from their anceſtors. But what marks ſtrongly the character of Cathmor, is his averſion to praiſe; for he is repreſented to dwell in a wood to avoid the thanks of his gueſts; which is ſtill a higher degree of generoſity than that of Axylus in Homer: for the poet does not ſay, but the good man might, at the head of his own table, have heard with pleaſure the praiſe beſtowed on him by the people he entertained.

No nation in the world carried hoſpitality to a greater length than the ancient Scots. It was even infamous, for many ages, in a man of condition, to have the door of his houſe ſhut at all, LEST, as the bards expreſs it, THE STRANGER SHOULD COME AND BEHOLD HIS CONTRACTED SOUL. Some of the chiefs were poſſeſſed of this hoſpitable diſpoſition to an extravagant degree; and the bards, perhaps upon a private account, never failed to recommend it in their eulogiums. *Cean uia' na dai'* or *the point to which all the roads of the ſtrangers lead*, was an invariable

thought that mighty Cathmor came. Cathmor the friend of ſtrangers! the brother of red-haired Cairbar. Their ſouls were not the ſame. The light of heaven was in the boſom of Cathmor. His towers roſe on the banks of Atha; ſeven paths led to his halls. Seven chiefs ſtood on the paths, and called the ſtranger to the feaſt! But Cathmor dwelt in the wood, to ſhun the voice of praiſe!

Olla came with his ſongs. Oſcar went to Cairbar's feaſt. Three hundred warriors ſtrode along Moi-lena of the ſtreams. The grey dogs bounded on the heath: their howling reached afar. Fingal ſaw the departing hero. The ſoul of the king was ſad. He dreaded Cairbar's gloomy thoughts, amid the feaſt of ſhells. My ſon raiſed high the ſpear of Cormac. An hundred bards met him with ſongs. Cairbar concealed, with ſmiles, the death that was dark in his ſoul. The feaſt is ſpread. The ſhells reſound. Joy brightens the face of the hoſt. But it was like the parting beam of the ſun, when he is to hide his red head in a ſtorm!

Cairbar riſes in his arms. Darkneſs gathers on his brow. The hundred harps ceaſe at

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ble epithet given by them to the chiefs; on the contrary, they diſtinguiſhed the inhoſpitable by the title of *the cloud which the ſtrangers ſhun.* This laſt however was ſo uncommon, that in all the old poems I have ever met with, I found but one man branded with this ignominious appellation; and that, perhaps, only founded upon a private quarrel, which ſubſiſted between him and the patron of the bard who wrote the poem.

once.

once. The clang * of shields is heard. Far distant on the heath Olla raised a song of woe. My son knew the sign of death; and rising seized his spear. "Oscar," said the dark-red Cairbar, "I behold the spear † of Erin. The spear of Temora ‡ glitters in thy hand, son of woody Morven! It was the pride of an hundred § kings. The death of heroes of old. Yield it, son of Ossian, yield it to car-borne Cairbar!"

"Shall I yield," Oscar replied, "the gift of Erin's injured king; the gift of fair-haired Cormac, when Oscar scattered his foes? I came to Cormac's halls of joy, when Swaran fled from Fingal. Gladness rose in the face of youth. He gave the spear of Temora. Nor did he give it to the feeble: neither to the weak in soul. The darkness of thy face is no storm to me: nor are thine eyes the flame of death. Do I fear thy clanging shield? Trem-

* When a chief was determined to kill a person already in his power, it was usual to signify that his death was intended, by the sound of a shield struck with the blunt end of a spear; at the same time that a bard at a distance raised the *death song*.

† Cormac, the son of Arth, had given the spear, which is here the foundation of the quarrel, to Oscar, when he came to congratulate him upon Swaran's being expelled from Ireland.

‡ Ti' mór-i', *the house of the great king*, the name of the royal palace of the supreme kings of Ireland.

§ *Hundred* here is an indefinite number, and is only intended to express a great many. It was probably the hyperbolical phrases of bards that gave the first hint to the Irish Senachies to place the origin of their monarchy in so remote a period as they have done.

ble

ble I at Olla's ſong? No: Cairbar, frighten the feeble; Oſcar is a rock!"

"Wilt thou not yield the ſpear?" replied the riſing pride of Cairbar. "Are thy words ſo mighty, becauſe Fingal is near? Fingal with aged locks from Morven's hundred groves! He has fought with little men. But he muſt vaniſh before Cairbar, like a thin pillar of miſt before the winds of Atha *!" "Were he who fought with little men, near Atha's haughty chief: Atha's chief would yield green Erin to avoid his rage! Speak not of the mighty, O Cairbar! Turn thy ſword on me. Our ſtrength is equal: but Fingal is renowned! the firſt of mortal men!"

Their people ſaw the darkening chiefs. Their crowding ſteps are heard around. Their eyes roll in fire. A thouſand ſwords are half-unſheathed. Red-haired Olla raiſed the ſong of battle. The trembling joy of Oſcar's ſoul aroſe: the wonted joy of his ſoul when Fingal's horn was heard. Dark as the ſwelling wave of ocean before the riſing winds, when it bends its head near the coaſt, came on the hoſt of Cairbar!

Daughter of Toſcar †! why that tear? He is not fallen yet. Many were the deaths of his arm before my hero fell!

* Atha, *ſhallow river*: the name of Cairbar's ſeat in Connaught.

† Malvina, the daughter of Toſcar, to whom is addreſſed that part of the poem which related to the death of Oſcar her lover.

Behold

Behold they fall before my ſon, like groves in the deſert; when an angry ghoſt ruſhes through night, and takes their green heads in his hand! Morlath falls. Maronnan dies. Conachar trembles in his blood! Cairbar ſhrinks before Oſcar's ſword! He creeps in darkneſs behind a ſtone. He lifts the ſpear in ſecret; he pierces my Oſcar's ſide! He falls forward on his ſhield: his knee ſuſtains the chief. But ſtill his ſpear is in his hand. See gloomy Cairbar * falls! The ſteel pierced his forehead,

* The Iriſh hiſtorians place the death of Cairbar, in the latter end of the third century: they ſay, he was killed in battle againſt Oſcar the ſon of Oſſian, but deny that he fell by his hand.

It is, however, certain, that the Iriſh bards diſguiſe, in ſome meaſure, this part of their hiſtory. An Iriſh poem on this ſubject, which, undoubtedly, was the ſource of their information concerning the battle of Gabhra, where Cairbar fell, is juſt now in my hands. As a tranſlation of the poem (which, though evidently no very ancient compoſition, does not want poetical merit) would extend this note to too great a length, I ſhall only give the ſtory of it in brief, with ſome extracts from the original Iriſh.

Oſcar, ſays the Iriſh bard, was invited to a feaſt, at Temora, by Cairbar king of Ireland. A diſpute aroſe between the two heroes, concerning the exchange of ſpears, which was uſually made, between the gueſts and their hoſt, upon ſuch occaſions. In the courſe of their altercation, Cairbar ſaid, in a boaſtful manner, that he would hunt on the hills of Albion, and carry the ſpoils of it into Ireland, in ſpite of all the efforts of its inhabitants. The original words are;

Briathar buan ſin; Briathar buan
A bheireadh an Cairbre rua',
Gu tuga' ſe ſealg, agus creach
A h' ALBIN an la'r na mhaireach.

Oſcar

forehead, and divided his red hair behind. He lay, like a ſhattered rock, which Cromla ſhakes from its ſhaggy ſide; when the green-vallied Erin ſhakes its mountains, from ſea to ſea!

But never more ſhall Oſcar riſe! He leans on his boſſy ſhield. His ſpear is in his terrible hand. Erin's ſons ſtand diſtant and dark. Their ſhouts ariſe, like crowded ſtreams. Moilena echoes wide. Fingal heard the ſound. He took the ſpear of Selma. His ſteps are before us on the heath. He ſpoke the words of woe. "I hear the noiſe of war. Young Oſcar is alone. Riſe, ſons of Morven: join the hero's ſword!"

Oſcar replied, that, the next day, he himſelf would carry into Albion the ſpoils of the five provinces of Ireland; in ſpite of the oppoſition of Cairbar.

> Briathar eile an aghai' ſin
> A bheirea' an t' Oſcar, og, calma
> Gu'n tugadh ſealg agus creach
> Do dh' Albin an la'r na mhaireach, &c.

Oſcar, in conſequence of his threats, began to lay waſte Ireland; but as he returned with the ſpoil into Ulſter, thro' the narrow paſs of Gabhra (*Caoil ghlen Ghabhra*) he was met by Cairbar, and a battle enſued, in which both the heroes fell by mutual wounds. The bard gives a very curious liſt of the followers of Oſcar, as they marched to battle. They appear to have been five hundred in number, commanded, as the poet expreſſes it, by *five heroes of the blood of kings*. This poem mentions Fingal, as arriving from Scotland before Oſcar died of his wounds.

Oſſian

Oſſian ruſhed along the heath. Fillan bounded over Moi-lena. Fingal ſtrode in his ſtrength. The light of his ſhield is terrible. The ſons of Erin ſaw it far diſtant. They trembled in their ſouls. They knew that the wrath of the king aroſe: and they foreſaw their death. We firſt arrived. We fought. Erin's chiefs withſtood our rage. But when the king came, in the ſound of his courſe, what heart of ſteel could ſtand! Erin fled over Moi-lena. Death purſued their flight. We ſaw Oſcar on his ſhield. We ſaw his blood around. Silence darkened every face. Each turned his back and wept. The king ſtrove to hide his tears. His grey beard whiſtled in the wind. He bends his head above the chief. His words are mixed with ſighs.

"Art thou fallen, O Oſcar! in the midſt of thy courſe? the heart of the aged beats over thee! He ſees thy coming wars! The wars which ought to come he ſees! They are cut off from thy fame! When ſhall joy dwell at Selma? When ſhall grief depart from Morven? My ſons fall by degrees: Fingal is the laſt of his race. My fame begins to paſs away. Mine age will be without friends. I ſhall ſit a grey cloud in my hall. I ſhall not hear the return of a ſon, in his ſounding arms. Weep, ye heroes of Morven! never more ſhall Oſcar riſe!"

And they did weep, O Fingal! Dear was the hero to their ſouls. He went out to battle, and the foes vaniſhed. He returned, in

peace, amidst their joy. No father mourned his son slain in youth: no brother his brother of love. They fell, without tears, for the chief of the people is low! Bran* is howling at his feet: gloomy Luäth is sad, for he had often led them to the chase; to the bounding roe of the desert!

When Oscar saw his friends around, his heaving breast arose. "The groans," he said, "of aged chiefs: the howling of my dogs: the sudden bursts of the song of grief, have melted Oscar's soul. My soul, that never melted before. It was like the steel of my sword. Ossian, carry me to my hills! Raise the stones of my renown. Place the horn of a deer: place my sword by my side. The torrent hereafter may raise the earth: the hunter may find the steel and say, "This has been Oscar's sword, the pride of other years!" "Fallest thou, son of my fame! shall I never see thee, Oscar! When others hear of their sons; shall I not hear of thee? The moss is on thy four grey stones. The mournful wind is there. The battle shall be fought without thee. Thou shalt not pursue the dark-brown hinds. When the warrior returns from battles, and tells of other lands; "I have seen a tomb," he will say, "by the roaring stream, the dark dwelling of a chief. He fell by car-borne Oscar, the first of mortal men." I, per-

* Bran was one of Fingal's dogs. Bran signifies *a mountain-stream*.

haps,

haps, ſhall hear his voice. A beam of joy will riſe in my ſoul."

Night would have deſcended in ſorrow, and morning returned in the ſhadow of grief. Our chiefs would have ſtood, like cold dropping rocks on Moi-lena, and have forgot the war; did not the king diſperſe his grief, and raiſe his mighty voice. The chiefs, as new-awakened from dreams, lift up their heads around.

" How long on Moi-lena ſhall we weep? How long pour in Erin our tears? The mighty will not return. Oſcar ſhall not riſe in his ſtrength. The valiant muſt fall in their day, and be no more known on their hills. Where are our fathers, O warriors! the chiefs of the times of old? They have ſet like ſtars that have ſhone. We only hear the ſound of their praiſe. But they were renowned in their years: the terror of other times. Thus ſhall we paſs away, in the day of our fall. Then let us be renowned when we may; and leave our fame behind us, like the laſt beams of the ſun, when he hides his red head in the weſt. The traveller mourns his abſence, thinking of the flame of his beams. Ullin, my aged bard! take thou the ſhip of the king. Carry Oſcar to Selma of harps. Let the daughters of Morven weep. We muſt fight in Erin, for the race of fallen Cormac. The days of my years begin to fail. I feel the weakneſs of my arm. My fathers bend from their clouds, to receive their grey-hair'd ſon. But, before I go hence, one beam of fame ſhall riſe. My

days ſhall end, as my years begun, in fame. My life ſhall be one ſtream of light to bards of other times!"

Ullin rais'd his white ſails. The wind of the ſouth came forth. He bounded on the waves towards Selma. I remained in my grief, but my words were not heard. The feaſt is ſpread on Moi-lena. An hundred heroes reared the tomb of Cairbar. No ſong is raiſed over the chief. His ſoul had been dark and bloody. The bards remembered the fall of Cormac! what could they ſay in Cairbar's praiſe?

Night came rolling down. The light of an hundred oaks aroſe. Fingal ſat beneath a tree. Old Althan * ſtood in the midſt. He told the tale of fallen Cormac. Althan the ſon of Conachar, the friend of car-borne Cuthullin. He dwelt with Cormac in windy Temora, when Semo's ſon fell at Lego's ſtream. The tale of Althan was mournful. The tear was in his eye, when he ſpoke.

† "The ſetting ſun was yellow on Dora ‡. Grey evening began to deſcend. Temora's woods ſhook with the blaſt of the unconſtant wind.

* Althan, the ſon of Conachar, was the chief bard of Arth king of Ireland. After the death of Arth, Althan attended his ſon Cormac, and was preſent at his death. He had made his eſcape from Cairbar, by the means of Cathmor, and coming to Fingal, related, as here, the death of his maſter Cormac.

† Althan ſpeaks.

‡ Dora, *the woody ſide of a mountain*; it is here a hill in the neighbourhood of Temora.

wind. A cloud gathered in the weſt. A red ſtar looked from behind its edge. I ſtood in the wood alone. I ſaw a ghoſt on the darkening air! His ſtride extended from hill to hill. His ſhield was dim on his ſide. It was the ſon of Semo. I knew the warrior's face. But he paſſed away in his blaſt; and all was dark around! My ſoul was ſad. I went to the hall of ſhells. A thouſand lights aroſe. The hundred bards had ſtrung the harp. Cormac ſtood in the midſt, like the morning ſtar, when it rejoices on the eaſtern hill, and its young beams are bathed in ſhowers. Bright and ſilent is its progreſs aloft, but the cloud, that ſhall hide it, is near! The ſword of Artho* was in the hand of the king. He looked with joy on its poliſhed ſtuds: thrice he attempted to draw it, and thrice he failed; his yellow locks are ſpread on his ſhoulders! his cheeks of youth are red. I mourned over the beam youth, for he was ſoon to ſet!"

"Althan!" he ſaid, with a ſmile, "didſt thou behold my father? Heavy is the ſword of the king; ſurely his arm was ſtrong. O that I were like him battle, when the rage of his wrath aroſe! then would I have met with Cuthullin, the car-borne ſon of Cantéla! But years may come on, O Althan! and my arm be ſtrong. Haſt thou heard of Semo's ſon, the ruler of high Temora? He might have

* Arth, or Artho, the father of Cormac king of Ireland.

returned with his fame. He promifed to return to-night. My bards wait him with fongs. My feaft is fpread in the hall of kings."

I heard Cormac in filence. My tears began to flow. I hid them with my aged locks. The king perceived my grief. "Son of Conachar!" he faid, "is the fon of Semo * low? Why burfts the figh in fecret? Why defcends the tear? Comes the car-borne Torlath? Comes the found of red-haired Cairbar? They come! for I behold thy grief. Moffy Tura's chief is low! Shall I not rufh to battle? But I cannot lift the fpear! O had mine arm the ftrength of Cuthullin, foon would Cairbar fly; the fame of my fathers would be renewed; and the deeds of other times!"

He took his bow. The tears flow down, from both his fparkling eyes. Grief faddens round. The bards bend forward, from their hundred harps. The lone blaft touched their trembling ftrings. The found † is fad and low! A voice is heard at a diftance, as of one in grief. It was Carril of other times, who came from dark Slimora ‡. He told of the

* Cuthullin is called the king of Tura from a caftle of that name on the coaft of Ulfter, where he dwelt, before he undertook the management of the affairs of Ireland, in the minority of Cormac.

† That prophetic found, mentioned in other poems, which the harps of the bards emitted before the death of a perfon worthy and renowned. It is here an omen of the death of Cormac, which, foon after, followed.

‡ Slimora, a hill in Connaught, near which Cuthullin was killed.

 fall

fall of Cuthullin. He told of his mighty deeds. The people were ſcattered round his tomb. Their arms lay on the ground. They had forgot the war, for he, their ſire, was ſeen no more!

"But who," ſaid the ſoft-voiced Carril, "who come like bounding roes? Their ſtature is like young trees in the valley, growing in a ſhower! Soft and ruddy are their cheeks! Fearleſs ſouls look forth from the eyes! Who but the ſons of Uſnoth*, chief of ſtreamy Etha? The people riſe on every ſide, like the ſtrength of an half-extinguiſhed fire, when the winds come, ſudden, from the deſert, on their ruſtling wings. Sudden glows the dark brow of the hill; the paſſing mariner lags, on his winds. The ſound of Caithbat's † ſhield was

* Uſnoth chief of Etha, a diſtrict on the weſtern coaſt of Scotland, had three ſons, Nathos, Althos, and Ardan, by Sliſſàma the ſiſter of Cuthullin. The three brothers, when very young, were ſent over to Ireland by their father, to learn the uſe of arms under their uncle, whoſe military fame was very great in that kingdom. They had juſt arrived in Ulſter when the news of Cuthullin's death arrived. Nathos, the eldeſt of the three brothers, took the command of Cuthullin's army, and made head againſt Cairbar the chief of Atha. Cairbar having, at laſt, murdered young king Cormac, at Temora, the army of Nathos ſhifted ſides, and the brothers were obliged to return into Ulſter, in order to paſs over into Scotland. The ſequel of their mournful ſtory is related, at large, in the poem of Dar-thula.

† Caithbat was grandfather to Cuthullin; and his ſhield was made uſe of to alarm his poſterity to the battles of the family.

heard. The warriors ſaw Cuthullin * in Nathos. So rolled his ſparkling eyes! his ſteps were ſuch on heath! Battles are fought at Lego. The ſword of Nathos prevails. Soon ſhalt thou behold him in thy halls, king of Temora of groves!"

"Soon may I behold the chief!" replied the blue-eyed king. "But my ſoul is ſad for Cuthullin. His voice was pleaſant in mine ear. Often have we moved, on Dora, to the chaſe of the dark-brown hinds. His bow was unerring on the hills. He ſpoke of mighty men. He told of the deeds of my fathers. I felt my riſing joy. But ſit thou at the feaſt, O Carril! I have often heard thy voice. Sing in praiſe of Cuthullin. Sing of Nathos of Etha †!"

Day roſe on Temora, with all the beams of the eaſt. Crathin came to the hall, the ſon of old Gelláma ‡. "I behold," he ſaid, "a cloud in the deſert, king of Erin! a cloud it ſeemed at firſt, but now a crowd of men! One ſtrides before them in his ſtrength. His red hair flies in wind. His ſhield glitters to the beam of the eaſt. His ſpear is in his hand." "Call him to the feaſt of Temora," replied the brightening king. "My hall is the houſe of ſtrangers, ſon of generous Gelláma! It is perhaps the chief of Etha, coming

* That is, they ſaw a manifeſt likeneſs between the perſon of Nathos and Cuthullin.

† Nathos the ſon of Uſnoth.

‡ Geal-lamha, *white-handed.*

in all his renown. Hail, mighty * ſtranger! art thou of the friends of Cormac? But, Carril, he is dark, and unlovely. He draws his ſword. Is that the ſon of Uſnoth, bard of the times of old?"

"It is not the ſon of Uſnoth!" ſaid Carril. "It is Cairbar, thy foe. Why comeſt thou in thy arms to Temora? chief of the gloomy brow. Let not thy ſword riſe againſt Cormac! Whither doſt thou turn thy ſpeed?" He paſſed on in darkneſs. He ſeized the hand of the king. Cormac foreſaw his death; the rage of his eyes aroſe. "Retire, thou chief of Etha! Nathos comes with war. Thou art bold in Cormac's hall, for his arm is weak." The ſword entered the ſide of the king. He fell in the halls of his fathers. His fair hair is in the duſt. His blood is ſmoaking round.

"Art thou fallen in thy halls †?" ſaid Carril. "O ſon of noble Artho! The ſhield of Cuthullin was not near. Nor the ſpear of thy father. Mournful are the mountains of Erin, for the chief of the people is low! Bleſt be thy ſoul, O Cormac! Thou art darkened in thy youth."

His words came to the ear of Cairbar. He cloſed ‡ us in the midſt of darkneſs. He

* From this expreſſion, we underſtand, that Cairbar had entered the palace of Temora, in the midſt of Cormac's ſpeech.

† Althan ſpeaks.

‡ That is, himſelf and Carril, as it afterwards appears.

feared to ſtretch his ſword to the bards *, though his ſoul was dark. Long we pined alone! At length the noble Cathmor † came. He heard our voice from the cave. He turned the eye of his wrath on Cairbar.

"Brother of Cathmor," he ſaid, "how long wilt thou pain my ſoul? Thy heart is a rock. Thy thoughts are dark and bloody! But thou art the brother of Cathmor; and Cathmor ſhall ſhine in thy war. But my ſoul is not like thine: thou feeble hand in fight! The light of my boſom is ſtained with thy deeds. Bards will not ſing of my renown: they may ſay, "Cathmor was brave, but he fought for gloomy Cairbar." They will paſs over my tomb in ſilence. My fame ſhall not be heard. Cairbar! looſe the bards. They are the ſons of future times. Their voice ſhall be heard in other years; after the kings of Temora have failed. We came forth at the words of the chief. We ſaw him in his ſtrength. He was like thy youth, O Fingal! when thou firſt didſt lift the ſpear. His face was like the plain of the ſun, when it is bright. No darkneſs travelled over his brow.

* The perſons of the bards were ſo ſacred, that even he, who had juſt murdered his ſovereign, feared to kill them.

† Cathmor appears the ſame diſintereſted hero upon every occaſion. His humanity and generoſity were unparalleled: in ſhort, he had no fault, but too much attachment to ſo bad a brother as Cairbar. His family connection with Cairbar prevails, as he expreſſes it, over every other conſideration, and makes him engage in a war, of which he does not approve.

But he came with his thouſands to aid the red-haired Cairbar. Now he comes to revenge his death, O king of woody Morven!"

"Let Cathmor come," replied the king. "I love a foe ſo great. His ſoul is bright. His arm is ſtrong. His battles are full of fame. But the little ſoul is a vapour that hovers round the marſhy lake. It never riſes on the green hill, leſt the winds ſhould meet it there. Its dwelling is in the cave, it ſends forth the dart of death! Our young heroes, O warriors! are like the renown of our fathers. They fight in youth. They fall. Their names are in ſong. Fingal is amid his darkening years. He muſt not fall, as an aged oak, acroſs a ſecret ſtream. Near it are the ſteps of the hunter, as it lies beneath the wind. "How is that tree fallen?" he ſays, and, whiſtling, ſtrides along. Raiſe the ſong of joy, ye bards of Morven! Let our ſouls forget the paſt. The red ſtars look on us from clouds, and ſilently deſcend. Soon ſhall the grey beam of the morning riſe, and ſhew us the foes of Cormac. Fillan! my ſon, take thou the ſpear of the king. Go to Mora's dark-brown ſide. Let thine eyes travel over the heath. Obſerve the foes of Fingal: obſerve the courſe of generous Cathmor. I hear a diſtant ſound, like falling rocks in the deſert. But ſtrike thou thy ſhield, at times, that they may not come thro' night, and the fame of Morven ceaſe. I begin to be alone, my ſon. I dread the fall of my renown!"

The

The voice of bards arofe. The king leaned on the fhield of Trenmor. Sleep defcended on his eyes. His future battles arofe in his dreams. The hoft are fleeping around. Dark-haired Fillan obferves the foe. His fteps are on a diftant hill. We hear, at times, his clanging fhield.

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK II.

ARGUMENT to Book II.

This book opens, we may suppose about midnight, with a soliloquy of Ossian, who had retired from the rest of the army, to mourn for his son Oscar. Upon hearing the noise of Cathmor's army approaching, he went to find out his brother Fillan, who kept the watch on the hill of Mora, in the front of Fingal's army. In the conversation of the brothers, the episode of Conar, the son of Trenmor, who was the first king of Ireland, is introduced, which lays open the origin of the contests between the Caël and Firbolg, the two nations who first possessed themselves of that island. Ossian kindles a fire on Mora; upon which Cathmor desisted from the design he had formed of surprizing the army of the Caledonians. He calls a council of his chiefs; reprimands Foldath for advising a night attack, as the Irish army were so much superior in number to the enemy. The bard Fonar introduces the story of Crothar, the ancestor of the king, which throws further light on the history of Ireland, and the original pretensions of the family of Atha, to the throne of that kingdom. The Irish chiefs lie down to rest, and Cathmor himself undertakes the watch. In this circuit, round the army, he is met by Ossian. The interview of the two heroes is described. Cathmor obtains a promise from Ossian, to order a funeral elegy to be sung over the grave of Cairbar; it being the opinion of the times, that the souls of the dead could not be happy, till their elegies were sung by a bard. Morning comes. Cathmor and Ossian part; and the latter, casually meeting with Carril the son of Kinfena, sends that bard, with a funeral song, to the tomb of Cairbar.

TEMORA

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK II.

*FATHER of heroes! O Trenmor! High dweller of eddying winds! where the dark-red thunder marks the troubled clouds! Open thou thy ſtormy halls. Let the bards of old be near. Let them draw near with ſongs and their half-viewleſs harps. No dweller of miſty valley comes! No hunter unknown at his ſtreams! It is the car-borne Oſcar, from the fields of war. Sudden is thy

* Though this book has little action, it is not the leaſt important part of Temora. The poet, in ſeveral epiſodes, runs up the cauſe of the war to the very ſource. The firſt population of Ireland, the wars between the two nations who originally poſſeſſed that iſland, its firſt race of kings, and the revolutions of its government, are important facts, and are delivered by the poet, with ſo little mixture of the fabulous, that one cannot help preferring his accounts to the improbable fictions of the Scotch and Iriſh hiſtorians. The Mileſian fables bear about them the marks of a late invention. To trace their legends to their ſource would be no difficult taſk; but a diſquiſition of this ſort would extend this note too far.

change,

change, my ſon, from what thou wert on dark Moi-lena! The blaſt folds thee in its ſkirt, and ruſtles through the ſky! Doſt thou not behold thy father, at the ſtream of night? The chiefs of Morven ſleep far diſtant. They have loſt no ſon! But ye have loſt a hero, chiefs of reſounding Morven! Who could equal his ſtrength, when battle rolled againſt his ſide, like the darkneſs of crowded waters? Why this cloud on Oſſian's ſoul? It ought to burn in danger. Erin is near with her hoſt. The king of Selma is alone. Alone thou ſhalt not be, my father, while I can lift the ſpear!

I roſe, in all my arms. I roſe and liſtened to the wind. The ſhield of Fillan is not heard. I tremble for the ſon of Fingal. "Why ſhould the foe come by night? Why ſhould

* We underſtand, from the preceding book, that Cathmor was near with an army. When Cairbar was killed, the tribes who attended him fell back to Cathmor; who, as it afterwards appears, had taken a reſolution to ſurpriſe Fingal by night. Fillan was diſpatched to the hill of Mora, which was in the front of the Caledonians, to obſerve the motions of Cathmor. In this ſituation were affairs when Oſſian, upon hearing the noiſe of the approaching enemy, went to find out his brother. Their converſation naturally introduces the epiſode, concerning Conar the ſon of Trenmor, the firſt Iriſh monarch, which is ſo neceſſary to the underſtanding the foundation of the rebellion and uſurpation of Cairbar and Cathmor. Fillan was the youngeſt of the ſons of Fingal, then living. He and Boſmina, mentioned in the *battle of Lora*, were the only children of the king, by Clatho the daughter of Cathulla king of Inis-tore, whom he had taken to wife after the death of Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac Mac Conar king of Ireland.

the dark-haired warrior fail?" Diſtant, ſullen murmurs riſe: like the noiſe of the lake of Lego, when its waters ſhrink, in the days of froſt, and all its burſting ice reſounds. The people of Lara look to heaven, and foreſee the ſtorm! My ſteps are forward on the heath. The ſpear of Oſcar in my hand! Red ſtars looked from high. I gleamed, along the night.

I ſaw Fillan ſilent before me, bending forward from Mora's rock. He heard the ſhout of the foe. The joy of his ſoul aroſe. He heard my ſounding tread, and turned his lifted ſpear. "Comeſt thou, ſon of night, in peace? Or doſt thou meet my wrath? The foes of Fingal are mine. Speak, or fear my ſteel. I ſtand not, in vain, the ſhield of Morven's race." "Never mayſt thou ſtand in vain, ſon of blue-eyed Clatho! Fingal begins to be alone. Darkneſs gathers on the laſt of his days. Yet he has two * ſons who ought to

* That is, two ſons in Ireland. Fergus, the ſecond ſon of Fingal, was, at that time, on an expedition, which is mentioned in one of the leſſer poems. He, according to ſome traditions, was the anceſtor of Fergus, the ſon of Erc or Arcath, commonly called *Fergus the ſecond* in the Scotch hiſtories. The beginning of the reign of Fergus over the Scots, is placed, by the moſt approved annals of Scotland, in the fourth year of the fifth age: a full century after the death of Oſſian. The genealogy of his family is recorded thus by the Highland Senachies; *Fergus Mac-Arcath, Mac-Chongael, Mac-Fergus, Mac-Fion-gäel na buai'*; *i. e.* Fergus the ſon of Arcath, the ſon of Congal, the ſon of Fergus, the ſon of Fingal *the victorious*. This ſubject is treated more at large, in the diſſertation annexed to the poem.

ſhine in war. Who ought to be two beams of light, near the ſteps of his departure."

"Son of Fingal," replied the youth, "it is not long ſince I raiſed the ſpear. Few are the marks of my ſword in war. But Fillan's ſoul is fire! The chiefs of Bolga * crowd around the ſhield of generous Cathmor. Their gathering is on that heath. Shall my ſteps approach their hoſt? I yielded to Oſcar alone, in the ſtrife of the race, on Cona!"

"Fillan, thou ſhalt not approach their hoſt; nor fall before thy fame is known. My name is heard in ſong: when needful I advance. From the ſkirts of night I ſhall view them over all their gleaming tribes. Why, Fillan, didſt thou ſpeak of Oſcar! Why awake my ſigh? I muſt forget † the warrior, till the ſtorm is rolled away. Sadneſs ought not to dwell in danger, nor the tear in the eye of war. Our fathers forgot their fallen ſons, till the noiſe of arms

* The ſouthern parts of Ireland went, for ſome time, under the name of Bolga, from the Fir-bolg or Belgæ of Britain who ſettled a colony there. *Bolg* ſignifies *a quiver*, from which proceeds *Fir-bolg*, i. e. *bowmen*; ſo called from their uſing bows more than any of the neighbouring nations.

† After this paſſage, Oſcar is not mentioned in all Temora. The ſituations of the characters who act in the poem are ſo intereſting, that others, foreign to the ſubject, could not be introduced with any luſtre. Though the epiſode, which follows, may ſeem to flow naturally enough from the converſation of the brothers, yet I have ſhewn, in a preceding note, and, more at large, in the diſſertation annexed to this collection, that the poet had a farther deſign in view.

arms was paſt. Then ſorrow returned to the tomb, and the ſong of bards aroſe." The memory of thoſe who fell, quickly followed the departure of war: when the tumult of battle is paſt, the ſoul, in ſilence, melts away, for the dead.

Conar* was the brother of Trathal, firſt of mortal men. His battles were on every coaſt. A thouſand ſtreams rolled down the blood of his foes. His fame filled green Erin, like a pleaſant gale. The nations gathered in Ullin, and they bleſſed the king; the king of the race of their fathers, from the land of Selma.

The chiefs † of the ſouth were gathered, in the darkneſs of their pride. In the horrid cave

* Conar, the firſt king of Ireland, was the ſon of Trenmor, the great grandfather of Fingal. It was on account of this family-connection, that Fingal was engaged in ſo many wars in the cauſe of the race of Conar. Though few of the actions of Trenmor are mentioned, he was the moſt renowned name of antiquity. The moſt probable opinion concerning him is, that he was the firſt, who united the tribes of the Caledonians, and commanded them, in chief, againſt the incurſions of the Romans. The genealogiſts of the North have traced his family far back, and given a liſt of his anceſtors to *Cuan-mór nan lan*, or Conmor of the ſwords, who, according to them, was the firſt who croſſed the *great ſea*, to Caledonia, from which circumſtance his name proceeded, which ſignifies *Great ocean*. Genealogies of ſo ancient a date, however, are little to be depended upon.

† The chiefs of the Fir-bolg who poſſeſſed themſelves of the ſouth of Ireland, prior, perhaps, to the ſettlement of the *Caël* of Caledonia, and the Hebrides, in Ulſter. From the ſequel, it appears that the Fir-bolg were, by much, the moſt powerful nation; and it is probable that the

cave of Muma they mixed their ſecret words. Thither often, they ſaid, the ſpirits of their fathers came; ſhewing their pale forms from the chinky rocks: reminding them of the honor of Bolga. "Why ſhould Conar reign," they ſaid, "the ſon of reſounding Morven?"

They came forth, like the ſtreams of the deſert, with the roar of their hundred tribes. Conar was a rock before them: broken they rolled on every ſide. But often they returned, and the ſons of Selma fell. The king ſtood, among the tombs of his warriors. He darkly bent his mournful face. His ſoul was rolled into itſelf: and he had marked the place, where he was to fall: when Trathal came, in his ſtrength, his brother from cloudy Morven. Nor did he come alone. Colgar * was at his ſide; Colgar the ſon of the king and of white-boſomed Solin-corma.

As Trenmor, clothed with meteors, deſcends from the halls of thunder, pouring the dark ſtorm before him over the troubled ſea: ſo Colgar deſcended to battle, and waſted the

the Caël muſt have ſubmitted to them, had they not received ſuccours from their mother-country, under the command of Conar.

* Colg-er, *fiercely-looking warrior.* Sulin-corma, *blue eyes.* Colger was the eldeſt of the ſons of Trathal: Comhal, who was the father of Fingal, was very young when the preſent expedition to Ireland happened. It is remarkable, that of all the anceſtors of Fingal, tradition makes the leaſt mention of Comhal; which, probably, proceeded from the unfortunate life and untimely death of that hero. From ſome paſſages concerning him, we learn, indeed, that he was brave, but he wanted conduct.

echoing

echoing field. His father rejoiced over the hero: but an arrow came! His tomb was raised, without a tear. The king was to revenge his son. He lightened forward in battle, till Bolga yielded at her streams!

When peace returned to the land: when his blue waves bore the king to Morven: then he remembered his son, and poured the silent tear. Thrice did the bards, at the cave of Furmono, call the soul of Colgar. They called him to the hills of his land. He heard them in his mist. Trathal placed his sword in the cave, that the spirit of his son might rejoice.

"Colgar *, son of Trathal!" said Fillan, "thou wert renowned in youth! But the king hath not marked my sword, bright-streaming on the field. I go forth with the crowd. I return, without my fame. But the foe approaches, Ossian! I hear their murmur on the heath. The sound of their steps is like thunder, in the bosom of the ground, when the rocking hills shake their groves, and not a blast pours from the darkened sky!"

Ossian turned sudden on his spear. He raised the flame of an oak on high. I spread it large, on Mora's wind. Cathmor stopt in

* The poem begins here to mark strongly the character of Fillan, who is to make so great a figure in the sequel. He has the impatience, the ambition and fire which are peculiar to a young hero. Kindled with the fame of Colgar, he forgets his untimely fall. From Fillan's expressions in this passage, it would seem, that he was neglected by Fingal, on account of his youth.

his courſe. Gleaming he ſtood, like a rock, on whoſe ſides are the wandering of blaſts; which ſeize its echoing ſtreams, and clothe them over with ice. So ſtood the friend * of ſtrangers! The winds lift his heavy locks. Thou art the talleſt of the race of Erin, king of ſtreamy Atha!

"Firſt of bards," ſaid Cathmor, "Fonar †, call the chiefs of Erin. Call red-haired Cormar: dark-browned Malthos: the ſide-long-looking gloom of Maronan. Let the pride of Foldath appear. The red rolling eye of Turlotho. Nor let Hidalla be forgot; his voice, in danger, is the ſound of a ſhower, when it falls in the blaſted vale, near Atha's falling ſtream. Pleaſant is its ſound, on the plain, whilſt broken thunder travels over the ſky!"

They came, in their clanging arms. They bent forward to his voice, as if a ſpirit of their fathers ſpoke from a cloud of night. Dreadful ſhone they to the light; like the fall of the ſtream of Brumo ‡, when the meteor

* Cathmor is diſtinguiſhed by this honourable title, on account of his generoſity to ſtrangers, which was ſo great as to be remarkable even in thoſe days of hoſpitality.

† *Fónar, the man of ſong.* Before the introduction of Chriſtianity a name was not impoſed upon any perſon, till he had diſtinguiſhed himſelf by ſome remarkable action, from which his name ſhould be derived.

‡ Brumo was a place of worſhip (Fing. b. 6.) in Craca, which is ſuppoſed to be one of the iſles of Shetland. It was thought, that the ſpirits of the deceaſed haunted it, by night, which adds more terror to the deſcription introduced here. *The horrid circle of Brumo, where often, they ſaid, the ghoſts of the dead howled round the ſtone of fear.*

lights

lights it, before the nightly ſtranger. Shuddering he ſtops in his journey, and looks up for the beam of the morn!

"Why* delights Foldath," ſaid the king, "to pour the blood of foes by night? Fails his arm in battle, in the beams of day? Few are the foes before us, why ſhould we clothe us in ſhades? The valiant delight to ſhine, in the battles of their land! Thy council was in vain, chief of Moma! The eyes of Morven do not ſleep. They are watchful, as eagles, on their moſſy rocks. Let each collect, beneath his cloud, the ſtrength of his roaring tribe. To-morrow I move, in light, to meet the foes of Bolga? Mighty † was he that is low, the race of Borbar-Duthul!"

"Not unmarked!" ſaid Foldath, "were my ſteps before thy race. In light, I met the foes of Cairbar. The warrior praiſed my deeds. But his ſtone was raiſed without a tear! No bard ‡ ſung over Erin's king. Shall his foes rejoice along their moſſy hills? No: they muſt not rejoice! He was the friend of Foldath! Our words were mixed, in ſecret, in Moma's ſilent cave; whilſt thou, a boy in the

* From this paſſage, it appears, that it was Foldath who had adviſed the night attack. The gloomy character of Foldath is properly contraſted to the generous, the open Cathmor.

† By this exclamation Cathmor intimates that he intends to revenge the death of his brother Cairbar.

‡ To have no funeral elegy ſung over his tomb, was, among the Celtæ, reckoned the greateſt misfortune that could beſal a man; as his ſoul could not otherwiſe be admitted to the *airy hall of his fathers.*

 field,

field, purſuedſt the thiſtle's beard. With Moma's ſons I ſhall ruſh abroad, and find the foe, on his duſky hills. Fingal ſhall lie, without his ſong, the grey-haired king of Selma."

"Doſt thou think, thou feeble man," replied Cathmor, half-enraged: "Doſt thou think Fingal can fall, without his fame, in Erin? Could the bards be ſilent at the tomb of Selma's king? The ſong would burſt in ſecret! the ſpirit of the king would rejoice! It is when thou ſhalt fall, that the bard ſhall forget the ſong. Thou art dark, chief of Moma, though thine arm is a tempeſt in war. Do I forget the king of Erin, in his narrow houſe? My ſoul is not loſt to Cairbar, the brother of my love! I marked the bright beams of joy, which travelled over his cloudy mind, when I returned, with fame, to Atha of the ſtreams."

Tall they removed, beneath the words of the king. Each to his own dark tribe; where, humming, they rolled on the heath, faint-glittering to the ſtars: like waves, in a rocky bay, before the nightly wind. Beneath an oak, lay the chief of Atha. His ſhield, a duſky round, hung high. Near him, againſt a rock, leaned the fair ſtranger* of Inis-huna: that beam of light, with wandering locks, from Lumon of the roes. At diſtance roſe the voice of Fonar, with the deeds of the days of old.

* By *the ſtranger of Inis-huna*, is meant Sulmalla, the daughter of Conmor king of Inis-huna, the ancient name of that part of South Britain, which is next to the Iriſh coaſt. She had followed Cathmor in diſguiſe. Her ſtory is related at large in the fourth book.

old. The ſong fails, at times, in Lubar's growing roar!

"Crothar *," begun the bard, "firſt dwelt at Atha's moſſy ſtream! A thouſand † oaks, from the mountains, formed his echoing hall. The gathering of the people was there, around the feaſt of the blue-eyed king. But who, among his chiefs, was like the ſtately Crothar? Warriors kindled in his preſence. The young ſigh of the virgins roſe. In Alnecma † was the warrior honoured: the firſt of the race of Bolga.

"He

* Crothar was the anceſter of Cathmor, and the firſt of his family who had ſettled in Atha. It was in his time that the firſt wars were kindled between the Fir-bolg and Caël. The propriety of the epiſode is evident; as the conteſt which originally roſe between Crothar and Conar, ſubſiſted afterwards between their poſterity, and was the foundation of the ſtory of the poem.

† From this circumſtance we may learn, that the art of building with ſtone was not known in Ireland ſo early as the days of Crothar. When the colony were long ſettled in the country, the arts of civil life began to increaſe among them, for we find mention made of the *towers of Atha* in the time of Cathmor, which could not well be applied to wooden buildings. In Caledonia they begun very early to build with ſtone. None of the houſes of Fingal, excepting Ti-foirmal, were of wood. Ti-foirmal was the great hall where the bards met to repeat their compoſitions annually, before they ſubmitted them to the judgment of the king in Selma. By ſome accident or other, this wooden houſe happened to be burnt, and an ancient bard, in the character of Oſſian, has left us a curious catalogue of the furniture which it contained The poem is not juſt now in my hands, otherwiſe I would lay here a tranſlation of it before the reader. It has little poetical merit, and evidently bears the marks of a later period.

† Alnecma, or Alnecmacht, was the ancient name of Connaught. Ullin is ſtill the Iriſh name of the province

 of

"He purſued the chaſe in Ullin: on the moſs-covered top of Drumardo. From the wood looked the daughter of Cathmin, the blue-rolling eye of Con-láma. Her ſigh roſe in ſecret. She bent her head, midſt her wandering locks. The moon looked in, at night, and ſaw the white-toſſing of her arms; for ſhe thought of the mighty Crothar, in the ſeaſon of dreams.

"Three days feaſted Crothar with Cathmin. On the fourth they awaked the hinds. Con-lama moved to the chaſe, with all her lovely ſteps. She met Crothar in the narrow path. The bow fell at once from her hand. She turned her face away, and half-hid it with her locks. The love of Crothar roſe. He brought the white-boſomed maid to Atha. Bards raiſed the ſong in her preſence. Joy dwelt round the daughter of Cathmin.

"The pride of Turloch roſe, a youth who loved the white-handed Con-láma. He came, with battle, to Alnecma; to Atha of the roes. Cormul went forth to the ſtrife, the brother of car-borne Crothar. He went forth, but he fell. The ſigh of his people roſe. Silent and tall, acroſs the ſtréam, came the darkening ſtrength of Crothar: he rolled the foe from Alnecma. He returned, midſt the joy of Con-láma.

of Ulſter. To avoid the multiplying of notes, I ſhall here give the ſignification of the names in this epiſode. Drumardo, *high ridge.* Cathmin, *calm in battle.* Cón-lamha, *ſoft hand.* Turloch, *man of the quiver.* Cormul, *blue eye.*

" Battle on battle comes. Blood is poured on blood. The tombs of the valiant riſe. Erin's clouds are hung round with ghoſts. The chiefs of the ſouth gathered round the echoing ſhield of Crothar. He came, with death, to the paths of the foe. The virgins wept, by the ſtreams of Ullin. They looked to the miſt of the hill: no hunter deſcended from its folds. Silence darkened in the land. Blaſts ſighed lonely on graſſy tombs.

" Deſcending like the eagle of heaven, with all his ruſtling wings, when he forſakes the blaſt, with joy, the ſon of Trenmor came; Conar, arm of death, from Morven of the groves. He poured his might along green Erin. Death dimly ſtrode behind his ſword. The ſons of Bolga fled, from his courſe, as from a ſtream, that burſting from the ſtormy deſert, rolls the fields together with all their echoing woods. Crothar * met him in battle:

* The delicacy here, with regard to Crothar, is proper. As he was the anceſtor of Cathmor, to whom the epiſode is addreſſed, the bard ſoftens his defeat, by only mentioning that his *people fled.* Cathmor took the ſong of Fonar in an unfavourable light. The bards, being of the order of the Druids, who pretended to a foreknowledge of events, were ſuppoſed to have ſome ſupernatural preſcience of futurity. The king thought that the choice of Fonar's ſong proceeded from his foreſeeing the unfortunate iſſue of the war; and that his own fate was ſhadowed out, in that of his anceſtor Crothar. The attitude of the bard, after the reprimand of his patron, is picturеſque and affecting. We admire the ſpeech of Cathmor, but lament the effect it has on the feeling ſoul of the good old poet.

but Alnecma's warriors fled. The king of Atha, ſlowly retired, in the grief of his ſoul. He, afterwards, ſhone in the ſouth; but dim as the ſun of Autumn; when he viſits, in his robes of miſt, Lara of dark ſtreams. The withered graſs is covered with dew: the field, tho' bright, is ſad."

"Why wakes the bard before me," ſaid Cathmor, "the memory of thoſe who fled? Has ſome ghoſt, from his duſky cloud, bent forward to thine ear; to frighten Cathmor from the field, with the tales of old? Dwellers of the ſkirts of night, your voice is but a blaſt to me; which takes the grey thiſtle's head, and ſtrews its beard on ſtreams. Within my boſom is a voice. Others hear it not. His ſoul forbids the king of Erin to ſhrink back from war."

Abaſhed the bard ſinks back in night: retired he bends above a ſtream. His thoughts are on the days of Atha, when Cathmor heard his ſong with joy. His tears come rolling down. The winds are in his beard. ERIN ſleeps around. No ſleep comes down on Cathmor's eyes. Dark, in his ſoul, he ſaw the ſpirit of low-laid Cairbar. He ſaw him, without his ſong, rolled in a blaſt of night. He roſe. His ſteps were round the hoſt. He ſtruck, at times, his echoing ſhield. The ſound reached Oſſian's ear on Mora's moſſy brow.

"Fillan," I ſaid, "the foes advance. I hear the ſhield of war. Stand thou in the narrow path. Oſſian ſhall mark their courſe. If over

my fall the host should pour; then be thy buckler heard. Awake the king on his heath, lest his fame should fly away." I strode in all my rattling arms; wide-bounding over a stream that darkly-winded, in the field, before the king of Atha. Green Atha's king, with lifted spear, came forward on my course. Now would we have mixed in horrid fray, like two contending ghosts, that bending forward, from two clouds, send forth the roaring winds; did not Ossian behold, on high, the helmet of Erin's kings. The Eagle's wing spread above it, rustling in the breeze. A red star looked thro' the plumes. I stopt the lifted spear.

"The helmet of kings is before me! Who art thou, son of night? Shall Ossian's spear be renowned, when thou art lowly-laid? At once he dropt the gleaming lance. Growing before me seemed the form. He stretched his hand in night. He spoke the words of kings.

"Friend of the spirits of heroes, do I meet thee thus in shades? I have wished for thy stately steps in Atha, in the days of joy. Why should my spear now arise? The sun must behold us, Ossian; when we bend, gleaming, in the strife. Future warriors shall mark the place: and, shuddering, think of other years. They shall mark it, like the haunt of ghosts, pleasant and dreadful to the soul."

"Shall it then be forgot," I said, "where we meet in peace? Is the remembrance of battles always pleasant to the soul? Do not we behold,

behold, with joy, the place where our fathers feast d? But our eyes are full of tears, on the fields of their war. This ſtone ſhall riſe, with all its moſs, and ſpeak to other years. "Here Cathmor and Oſſian met: the warriors met in peace!" When thou, O ſtone, ſhalt fail: when Lubar's ſtream ſhall roll away! then ſhall the traveller come, and bend here, perhaps, in reſt. When the darkened moon is rolled over his head, our ſhadowy forms may come, and, mixing with his dreams, remind him of this place. But why turneſt thou ſo dark away, ſon of Borbar-duthul*?"

"Not forgot, ſon of Fingal, ſhall WE aſcend theſe winds. Our deeds are ſtreams of light, before the eyes of bards. But darkneſs is rolled on Atha: the king is low, without his ſong: ſtill there was a beam towards Cathmor from his ſtormy ſoul; like the moon, in a cloud, amidſt the dark-red courſe of thunder."

"Son of Erin," I replied, "my wrath dwells not in his earth †. My hatred flies, on eagle wing, from the foe that is low. He

* Borbar-duthul, *the ſurly warrior of the dark-brown eyes*. That his name ſuited well with his character, we may eaſily conceive, from the ſtory delivered concerning him by Malthos, toward the end of the ſixth book. He was the brother of that Colculla, who is mentioned in the epiſode which begins the fourth book.

† This reply abounds with the ſentiments of a noble mind. Tho', of all men living, he was the moſt injured by Cairbar, yet he lays aſide his rage as the *foe was low*. How different is this from the behaviour of the heroes of other ancient poems? *Cynthius aurem vellit.*

shall

ſhall hear the ſong of bards. Cairbar ſhall rejoice on his winds."

Cathmor's ſwelling ſoul aroſe. He took the dagger from his ſide, and placed it gleaming in my hand. He placed it, in my hand, with ſighs, and, ſilent, ſtrode away. Mine eyes followed his departure. He dimly gleamed, like the form of a ghoſt, which meets a traveller, by night on the dark-ſkirted heath. His words are dark like ſongs of old: with morning ſtrides the unfiniſhed ſhade away!

* Who comes from Lubar's vale? from the ſkirts of the morning miſt? The drops of heaven are on his head. His ſteps are in the paths of the ſad. It is Carril of other times. He comes from Tura's ſilent cave. I behold it dark in the rock, thro' the thin folds of miſt. There, perhaps, Cuthullin ſits, on the blaſt which bends its trees. Pleaſant is the ſong of the morning from the bard of Erin!

"The waves crowd away," ſaid Carril. "They crowd away for fear. They hear the ſound of thy coming forth, O ſun! Terrible is thy beauty, ſon of heaven, when death is deſcending on thy locks: when thou rolleſt thy vapours before thee, over the blaſted hoſt.

* The morning of the ſecond day, from the opening of the poem, comes on. After the death of Cuthullin, Carril, the ſon of Kinfena, his bard, retired to the cave of Tura, which was in the neighbourhood of Moi-lena, the ſcene of the poem of Temora. His caſual appearance here enables Oſſian to fulfil immediately the promiſe he had made to Cathmor, of cauſing the *funeral ſong* to be pronounced over the tomb of Cairbar. This book takes up only the ſpace of a few hours.

But

But pleaſant is thy beam to the hunter, ſitting by the rock in a ſtorm, when thou ſheweſt thyſelf from the parted cloud, and brighteneſt his dewy locks: he looks down on the ſtreamy vale, and beholds the deſcent of roes! How long ſhalt thou riſe on war, and roll, a bloody ſhield, thro' heaven? I ſee the deaths of heroes, dark-wandering over thy face!"

"Why wander the words of Carril?" I ſaid. "Does the ſon of heaven mourn? He is unſtained in his courſe, ever rejoicing in his fire. Roll on, thou careleſs light. Thou too, perhaps, muſt fall. Thy darkening hour may ſeize thee, ſtruggling as thou rolleſt through thy ſky. But pleaſant is the voice of the bard: pleaſant to Oſſian's ſoul! It is like the ſhower of the morning, when it comes through the ruſtling vale, on which the ſun looks thro' miſt, juſt riſing from his rocks. But this is no time, O bard! to ſit down, at the ſtrife of ſong. Fingal is in arms on the vale. Thou ſeeſt the flaming ſhield of the king. His face darkens between his locks. He beholds the wide rolling of Erin. Does not Carril behold that tomb, beſide the roaring ſtream? Three ſtones lift their grey heads, beneath a bending oak. A king is lowly laid! Give thou his ſoul to the wind. He is the brother of Cathmor! Open his airy hall! Let thy ſong be a ſtream of joy to Cairbar's darkened ghoſt!

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK III.

ARGUMENT to Book III.

Morning coming on, Fingal, after a ſpeech to his people, devolves the command on Gaul, the ſon of Morni; it being the cuſtom of the times, that the king ſhould not engage, till the neceſſity of affairs required his ſuperior valour and conduct. The king and Oſſian retire to the rock of Cormul, which overlooked the field of battle. The bards ſing the war-ſong. The general conflict is deſcribed. Gaul, the ſon of Morni, diſtinguiſhes himſelf: kills Turlathon, chief of Moruth, and other chiefs of leſſer name. On the other hand, Foldath, who commanded the Iriſh army (for Cathmor, after the example of Fingal, kept himſelf from battle) fights gallantly; kills Connal, chief of Dun-lora, and advances to engage Gaul himſelf. Gaul in the mean time, being wounded in the hand, by a random arrow, is covered by Fillan, the ſon of Fingal, who performs prodigies of valour. Night comes on. The horn of Fingal recalls his army. The bards meet them, with a congratulatory ſong, in which the praiſes of Gaul and Fillan are particularly celebrated. The chiefs ſit down at a feaſt; Fingal miſſes Connal. The epiſode of Connal and Duth-caron is introduced; which throws further light on the ancient hiſtory of Ireland. Carril is diſpatched to raiſe the tomb of Connal. The action of this book takes up the ſecond day from the opening of the poem.

TEMORA

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK III.

WHO is that at blue-ſtreaming Lubar? Who, by the bending hill of roes? Tall, he leans on an oak torn from high, by nightly winds. Who but Comhal's ſon, brightening in the laſt of his fields? His grey hair is on the breeze. He half unſheaths the ſword of Luno. His eyes are turned to Moi-lena, to the dark moving of foes. Doſt thou hear the voice of the king? It is like the burſting of a ſtream in the deſert, when it comes, between its echoing rocks, to the blaſted field of the ſun!

Wide-ſkirted comes down the foe! Sons of woody Selma, ariſe! Be ye like the rocks of our land, on whoſe brown ſides are the rolling of ſtreams. A beam of joy comes on my ſoul. I ſee the foe mighty before me. It is when HE is feeble, that the ſighs of Fingal are heard: leſt death ſhould come without renown, and darkneſs dwell on his tomb. Who ſhall lead the

the war, againſt the hoſt of Alnecma? It is only when danger grows, that my ſword ſhall ſhine. Such was the cuſtom, heretofore, of Trenmor the ruler of winds! and thus deſcended to battle the blue-ſhielded Trathal!

The chiefs bend toward the king. Each darkly ſeems to claim the war. They tell, by halves, their mighty deeds. They turn their eyes on Erin. But far before the reſt the ſon of Morni ſtands. Silent he ſtands, for who had not heard of the battles of Gaul? They roſe within his ſoul. His hand, in ſecret, ſeized the ſword. The ſword which he brought from Strumon, when the ſtrength of Morni failed*.

On

* Strumon, *ſtream of the hill*, the name of the ſeat of the family of Gaul, in the neighbourhood of Selma. During Gaul's expedition to Tromathon, mentioned in the *poem of Oithona*, Morni his father died. Morni ordered the *ſword of Strumon* (which had been preſerved, in the family, as a relique, from the days of Colgach, the moſt renowned of his anceſtors) to be laid by his ſide, in the tomb: at the ſame time, leaving it in charge to his ſon, not to take it from thence, till he was reduced to the laſt extremity. Not long after, two of his brothers being ſlain, in battle, by Coldaronnan, chief of Clutha, Gaul went to his father's tomb to take the ſword. His addreſs to the ſpirit of the deceaſed hero, is the ſubject of the following ſhort poem.

GAUL.

"Breaker of echoing ſhields, whoſe head is deep in ſhades; hear me from the darkneſs of Clora, O ſon of Colgach, hear!

"No ruſtling, like the eagle's wing, comes over the courſe of my ſtreams. Deep boſomed in the midſt of the deſert, O king of Strumon, hear!

"Dwelleſt thou in the ſhadowy breeze, that pours its dark wave over the graſs? Ceaſe to ſtrew the beard of the thiſtle; O chief of Clora, hear!

"Or

On his ſpear leans Fillan of Selma*, in the wandering of his locks. Thrice he raiſes his eyes to Fingal: his voice thrice fails him as he ſpeaks. My brother could not boaſt of battles: at once he ſtrides away. Bent over a diſtant ſtream he ſtands: the tear hangs in his eye. He ſtrikes, at times, the thiſtle's head, with his inverted ſpear. Nor is he unſeen of Fingal. Side-long he beholds his ſon. He beholds him, with burſting joy; and turns, amid his crowded ſoul. In ſilence turns the king to-

" Or rideſt thou on a beam, amidſt the dark trouble of clouds? Poureſt thou the loud wind on ſeas, to roll their blue waves over iſles? hear me, father of Gaul; amidſt thy terrors, hear!

" The ruſtling of eagles is heard, the murmuring oaks ſhake their heads on the hills: dreadful and pleaſant is thy approach, friend of the dwelling of heroes.

MORNI.

" Who awakes me, in the midſt of my cloud, where my locks of miſt ſpread on the winds? Mixed with the noiſe of ſtreams, why riſes the voice of Gaul?

GAUL.

" My foes are around me, Morni: their dark ſhips deſcend from their waves. Give the ſword of Strumon, that beam which thou hideſt in thy night.

MORNI.

" Take the ſword of reſounding Strumon; I look on thy war, my ſon; I look, a dim meteor, from my cloud: blue-ſhielded Gaul, deſtroy."

* Clatho was the daughter of Cathulla, king of Iniſtore. Fingal, in one of his expeditions to that iſland, fell in love with Clatho, and took her to wife, after the death of Roſcrana, the daughter of Cormac, king of Ireland.

Clatho was the mother of Ryno, Fillan, and Boſmina, mentioned in the *battle of Lora*. Fillan is often called the ſon of Clatho, to diſtinguiſh him from thoſe ſons which Fingal had by Roſcrana.

ward Mora of woods. He hides the big tear with his locks. At length his voice is heard.

"Firſt of the ſons of Morni! Thou rock that defieſt the ſtorm! Lead thou my battle, for the race of low-laid Cormac. No boy's ſtaff is thy ſpear: no harmleſs beam of light thy ſword. Son of Morni of ſteeds, behold the foe! Deſtroy! Fillan, obſerve the chief! He is not calm in ſtrife: nor burns he, heedleſs, in battle. My ſon, obſerve the chief! He is ſtrong as Lubar's ſtream, but never foams and roars. High on cloudy Mora, Fingal ſhall behold the war. Stand, Oſſian*, near thy father, by the falling ſtream. Raiſe the voice, O bards! Selma, move beneath the ſound. It is my latter field. Clothe it over with light."

As the ſudden riſing of winds; or diſtant rolling of troubled ſeas, when ſome dark ghoſt, in wrath, heaves the billows over an iſle: an iſle, the ſeat of miſt, on the deep, for many dark-brown years! So terrible is the ſound of the hoſt, wide-moving over the field. Gaul is tall before them. The ſtreams glitter within his ſtrides. The bards raiſe the ſong by his ſide. He ſtrikes his ſhield between. On the ſkirts of the blaſt, the tuneful voices riſe.

"On Crona," ſaid the bards, "there burſts a ſtream by night. It ſwells in its own dark courſe, till morning's early beam. Then comes it white from the hill, with the rocks and their hundred groves. Far be my ſteps from Crona.

* Ullin being ſent to Morven with the body of Oſcar, Oſſian attends his father, in quality of chief bard.

Death

Death is tumbling there. Be ye a ſtream from Mora, ſons of cloudy Morven!"

"Who riſes, from his car, on Clutha? The hills are troubled before the king! The dark woods echo round, and lighten at his ſteel. See him amidſt the foe, like Colgach's * ſportful ghoſt: when he ſcatters the clouds, and rides the eddying winds! It is Morni † of bounding ſteeds! Be like thy father, O Gaul!"

"Selma is opened wide. Bards take the trembling harps. Ten youths bear the oak of the feaſt. A diſtant ſun-beam marks the hill. The duſky waves of the blaſt fly over the fields of graſs. Why art thou ſilent, O Selma?

* There are ſome traditions, but, I believe, of late invention, that this Colgach was the ſame with the Galgacus of Tacitus. He was the anceſtor of Gaul, the ſon of Morni, and appears, from ſome, really ancient traditions, to have been king, or Vergobret, of the Caledonians; and hence proceeded the pretenſions of the family of Morni to the throne, which created a good deal of diſturbance, both to Comhal and his ſon Fingal. The firſt was killed in battle by that tribe; and it was after Fingal was grown up, that they were reduced to obedience. Colgach ſignifies *fiercely-looking*; which is a very proper name for a warrior, and is probably the origin of Galgacus; though I believe it a matter of mere conjecture, that the Colgach here mentioned was the ſame with that hero. I cannot help obſerving, that the ſong of the bards is conducted with propriety. Gaul, whoſe experience might have rendered his conduct cautious in war, has the example of his father, juſt ruſhing to battle, ſet before his eyes. Fillan, on the other hand, whoſe youth might make him impetuous and unguarded in action, is put in mind of the ſedate and ſerene behaviour of Fingal upon like occaſions.

† The expedition of Morni to Clutha, alluded to here, is handed down in tradition.

The king returns with all his fame. Did not the battle roar; yet peaceful is his brow? It roared, and Fingal overcame. Be like thy father, O Fillan!"

They move beneath the ſong. High wave their arms, as ruſhy fields, beneath autumnal winds. On Mora ſtands the king in arms. Miſt flies round his buckler abroad; as, aloft it hung on a bough, on Cormul's moſſy rock. In ſilence I ſtood by Fingal, and turned my eyes on Cromla's* wood: leſt I ſhould behold the hoſt, and ruſh amid my ſwelling ſoul. My foot is forward on the heath. I glittered, tall, in ſteel: like the falling ſtream of Tromo, which nightly winds bind over with ice. The boy ſees it, on high, gleaming to the early beam: toward it he turns his ear, and wonders why it is ſo ſilent!

Nor bent over a ſtream is Cathmor, like a youth in a peaceful field. Wide he drew forward the war, a dark and troubled wave. But when he beheld Fingal on Mora; his generous pride aroſe. "Shall the chief of Atha fight, and no king in the field? Foldath, lead my people forth. Thou art a beam of fire."

Forth iſſues Foldath of Moma, like a cloud, the robe of ghoſts. He drew his ſword, a flame, from his ſide. He bade the battle move. The tribes, like ridgy waves, dark pour their ſtrength around. Haughty is his ſtride before

* The mountain Cromla was in the neighbourhood of the ſcene of this poem; which was nearly the ſame with that of Fingal.

them. His red eye rolls in wrath. He calls Cormul chief of Dun-ratho * and his words were heard.

" Cormul, thou beholdest that path. It winds green behind the foe. Place thy people there; lest Selma should escape from my sword. Bards of green-valleyed Erin, let no voice of yours arise. The sons of Morven must fall without song, They are the foes of Cairbar. Hereafter shall the traveller meet their dark, thick mist on Lena, where it wanders with their ghosts, beside the reedy lake. Never shall they rise, without song, to the dwelling of winds."

Cormul darkened, as he went. Behind him rushed his tribe. They sunk beyond the rock. Gaul spoke to Fillan of Selma; as his eye pursued the course of the dark-eyed chief of Dunratho. " Thou beholdest the steps of Cormul! Let thine arm be strong! When he is low, son of Fingal, remember Gaul in war. Here I fall forward into battle, amid the ridge of shields."

The sign of death ascends: the dreadful sound of Morni's shield. Gaul pours his voice between. Fingal rises on Mora. He saw them,

* Dun-ratho, *a hill with a plain on its top.* Cormul, *blue eye.* Foldath dispatches here, Cormul to lie in ambush behind the army of the Caledonians. This speech suits with the character of Foldath, which is, throughout, haughty and presumptuous. Towards the latter end of this speech, we find the opinion of the times, concerning the unhappiness of the souls of those who were buried without the funeral song. This doctrine was inculcated by the bards, to make their order respectable and necessary.

from wing to wing, bending at once in ſtriſe. Gleaming on his own dark hill, ſtood Cathmor of ſtreamy Atha. The kings were like two ſpirits of heaven, ſtanding each on his gloomy cloud; when they pour abroad the winds, and lift the roaring ſeas. The blue-tumbling of waves is before them, marked with the paths of whales. They themſelves are calm and bright. The gale lifts ſlowly their locks of miſt!

What beam of light hangs high in air! What beam, but Morni's dreadful ſword! Death is ſtrewed on thy paths, O Gaul! Thou foldeſt them together in thy rage. Like a young oak falls Tur-lathon*, with his branches round him. His high-boſomed ſpouſe ſtretches her white arms, in dreams, to the returning chief, as ſhe ſleeps by gurgling Moruth, in her diſordered locks. It is his ghoſt, Oichaoma. The chief is lowly laid. Hearken not to the winds for Turlathon's echoing ſhield. It is pierced, by his ſtreams. Its ſound is paſt away.

Not peaceful is the hand of Foldath. He winds his courſe in blood. Connal met him in fight. They mixed their clanging ſteel. Why ſhould mine eyes behold them! Connal, thy locks are grey! Thou wert the friend of ſtrangers, at the moſs-covered rock of Dun-lora. When the ſkies were rolled together:

* Tur-lathon, *broad trunk of a tree.* Móruth, *great ſtream.* Oichaoma, *mild maid.* Dun-lora, *the hill of the noiſy ſtream.* Duth-caron, *dark-brown man.*

then

then thy feaſt was ſpread. The ſtranger heard the winds without; and rejoiced at thy burning oak. Why, ſon of Duth-caron, art thou laid in blood! The blaſted tree bends above thee. Thy ſhield lies broken near. Thy blood mixes with the ſtream; thou breaker of the ſhields!

Oſſian took the ſpear, in his wrath. But Gaul ruſhed forward on Foldath. The feeble paſs by his ſide: his rage is turned on Moma's chief. Now they had raiſed their deathful ſpears: unſeen an arrow came. It pierced the hand of Gaul. His ſteel fell ſounding to earth. Young Fillan came*, with Cormul's ſhield! He ſtretched it large before the chief. Foldath ſent his ſhouts abroad, and kindled all the field: as a blaſt that lifts the wide-winged flame over Lumon's echoing groves †.

"Son of blue-eyed Clatho," ſaid Gaul, "O Fillan! thou art a beam from heaven; that, coming on the troubled deep, binds up the tempeſt's wing. Cormul is fallen before thee. Early art thou in the fame of thy fathers. Ruſh not too far, my hero. I cannot lift the ſpear to aid. I ſtand harmleſs in battle: but my voice ſhall be poured abroad.

* Fillan had been diſpatched by Gaul to oppoſe Cormul, who had been ſent by Foldath to lie in ambuſh behind the Caledonian army. It appears that Fillan had killed Cormul, otherwiſe, he could not be ſuppoſed to have poſſeſſed himſelf of the ſhield of that chief.

† Lumon, *bending hill*; a mountain in Inis-huna, or that part of South-Britain which is over-againſt the Iriſh coaſt.

The

The ſons of Selma ſhall hear, and remember my former deeds."

His terrible voice roſe on the wind. The hoſt bends forward in fight. Often had they heard him, at Strumon, when he called them to the chaſe of the hinds. He ſtands tall, amid the war, as an oak in the ſkirts of a ſtorm, which now is clothed on high, in miſt: then ſhews its broad, waving head. The muſing hunter lifts his eye, from his own ruſhy field!

My ſoul purſues thee, O Fillan! through the path of thy fame. Thou rolledſt the foe before thee. Now Foldath, perhaps, may fly: but night comes down with its clouds. Cathmor's horn is heard on high. The ſons of Selma hear the voice of Fingal, from Mora's gathered miſt. The bards pour their ſong, like dew, on the returning war.

"Who comes from Strumon," they ſaid, "amid her wandering locks? She is mournful in her ſteps, and lifts her blue eyes toward Erin. Why art thou ſad, Evir-choama*? Who is like thy chief in renown? He deſcended dreadful to battle; he returns, like a light from a cloud. He raiſed the ſword in wrath: they ſhrunk before blue-ſhielded Gaul!

"Joy, like the ruſtling gale, comes on the ſoul of the king. He remembers the battles of old; the days wherein his fathers fought.

[illegible]-choama, *mild and ſtately maid*, the wife of Gaul. [illegible] was the daughter of Caſdu-conglaſs, chief of I-dronlo, one of the Hebrides.

The days of old return on Fingal's mind, as he beholds the renown of his ſon. As the ſun rejoices, from his cloud, over the tree his beams have raiſed, as it ſhakes its lonely head on the heath; ſo joyful is the king over Fillan!

"As the rolling of thunder on hills, when Lara's fields are ſtill and dark, ſuch are the ſteps of Selma pleaſant and dreadful to the ear. They return with their ſound, like eagles to their dark-brown rock, after the prey is torn on the field, the dun ſons of the bounding hind. Your fathers rejoice from their clouds, ſons of ſtreamy Selma!"

Such was the nightly voice of bards, on Mora of the hinds. A flame roſe, from an hundred oaks, which winds had torn from Cormul's ſteep. The feaſt is ſpread in the midſt: around ſat the gleaming chiefs. Fingal is there in his ſtrength. The eagle-wing * of his helmet ſounds. The ruſtling blaſts of the weſt, unequal ruſh through night. Long looks the king in ſilence round: at length his words are heard.

"My ſoul feels a want in our joy. I behold a breach among my friends. The head of one tree is low. The ſqually wind pours in on Selma. Where is the chief of Dunlora? Ought Connal to be forgot at the feaſt? When did he forget the ſtranger, in the midſt of

* The kings of Caledonia and Ireland had a plume of eagle's feathers, by way of ornament, in their helmets. It was from this diſtinguiſhed mark that Oſſian knew Cathmor in the ſecond book.

of his echoing hall? Ye are silent in my presence! Connal is then no more. Joy meet thee, O warrior! like a stream of light. Swift be thy course to thy fathers, along the roaring winds! Ossian, thy soul is fire: kindle the memory of the king. Awake the battles of Connal, when first he shone in war. The locks of Connal were grey. His days of youth* were mixed with mine. In one day Duthcaron first strung our bows, against the roes of Dun-lora.

"Many," I said, "are our paths to battle, in green-vallied Erin. Often did our sails arise, over the blue tumbling waves; when we came, in other days, to aid the race of Conar. The strife roared once in Alnecma, at the foam-covered streams of Duth-úla †. With Cormac descended to battle Duthcaron from cloudy Selma. Nor descended Duthcaron alone, his son was by his side, the long-haired youth of Connal lifting the first of his

* After the death of Comhal, and during the usurpation of the tribe of Morni, Fingal was educated in private by Duthcaron. It was then he contracted that intimacy with Connal, the son of Duthcaron, which occasions his regretting so much his fall. When Fingal was grown up, he soon reduced the tribe of Morni; and, as it appears from the subsequent episode, sent Duthcaron and his son Connal to the aid of Cormac, the son of Conar, king of Ireland, who was driven to the last extremity, by the insurrections of the Firbolg. This episode throws farther light on the contests between the Caol and Firbolg.

† Duth-úla, a river in Connaught; it signifies *dark-rushing water*.

spears. Thou didst command them, O Fingal! to aid the king of Erin.

"Like the bursting strength of ocean, the sons of Bolgar rushed to war. Colc-ulla * was before them, the chief of blue-streaming Atha. The battle was mixed on the plain. Cormac † shone in his own strife, bright as the forms of his fathers. But, far before the rest, Duthcaron hewed down the foe. Nor slept the arm of Connal by his father's side. Colc-ulla prevailed on the plain: like scattered mist, fled the people of Cormac ‡.

"Then

* Colc-ulla, *firm look in readiness*; he was the brother of Borbar-duthul, the father of Cairbar and Cathmor, who, after the death of Cormac, the son of Artho, successively mounted the Irish throne.

† Cormac the son of Conar, the second king of Ireland, of the race of the Caledonians. This insurrection of the Firbolg happened towards the latter end of the long reign of Cormac. He never possessed the Irish throne peaceably. The party of the family of Atha had made several attempts to overturn the succession in the race of Conar, before they effected it, in the minority of Cormac, the son of Artho. Ireland, from the most ancient accounts concerning it, seems to have been always so disturbed by domestic commotions, that it is difficult to say, whether it ever was, for any length of time, subject to one monarch. It is certain, that every province, if not every small district, had its own king. One of these petty princes assumed, at times, the title of king of Ireland, and, on account of his superior force, or in cases of public danger, was acknowledged by the rest as such; but the succession from father to son, does not appear to have been established. It was the divisions amongst themselves, arising from the bad constitution of their government, that, at last, subjected the Irish to a foreign yoke.

‡ The inhabitants of Ullin or Ulster, who were of the

race

"Then roſe the ſword of Duthcaron, and the ſteel of broad-ſhielded Connal. They ſhaded their flying friends, like two rocks with their heads of pine. Night came down on Duth-ula: ſilent ſtrode the chiefs over the field. A mountain-ſtream roared acroſs the path, nor could Duthcaron bound over its courſe." "Why ſtands my father?" ſaid Connal. "I hear the ruſhing foe."

"Fly, Connal," he ſaid. "Thy father's ſtrength begins to fail. I come wounded from battle. Here let me reſt in night." "But thou ſhalt not remain alone," ſaid Connal's burſting ſigh. "My ſhield is an eagle's wing to cover the king of Dun-lora." He bends dark above his father. The mighty Duthcaron dies.

Day roſe, and night returned. No lonely bard appeared, deep muſing on the heath: and could Connal leave the tomb of his father, till he ſhould receive his fame? He bent the bow againſt the roſe of Duth-ula. He ſpread the lonely feaſt. Seven nights he laid his head on the tomb, and ſaw his father in his dreams. He ſaw him rolled, dark, in a blaſt, like the vapour of reedy Lego. At length the ſteps of * Colgan came, the bard of high Temora.

race of the Caledonians, ſeem, alone, to have been the firm friends to the ſucceſſion in the family of Conar. The Firbolg were only ſubject to them by conſtraint, and embraced every opportunity to throw off their yoke.

* Colgan, the ſon of Cathmul, was the principal bard of Cormac, king of Ireland. The following dialogue, on

Temora. Duthcaron received his fame, and brightened, as he rose on the wind.

"Pleasant to the ear," said Fingal, "is the praise of the kings of men; when their bows are

on the loves of Fingal and Ros-crána, may be ascribed to him:

Ros-crana.

By night, came a dream to Ros-crána; I feel my beating soul. No vision of the forms of the dead came to the blue eyes of Erin. But, rising from the wave of the north, I beheld him bright in his locks. I beheld the son of the king. My beating soul is high. I laid my head down in night; again ascended the form. Why delayest thou thy coming, young rider of stormy waves?

But, there, far distant, he comes; where seas roll their green ridges in mist! Young dweller of my soul; why dost thou delay—

Fingal.

It was the soft voice of Moi-lena! the pleasant breeze of the valley of roes! But why dost thou hide thee in shades? Young love of heroes, rise. Are not thy steps covered with light? In thy groves thou appearest, Ros-crána, like the sun in the gathering of clouds. Why dost thou hide thee in shades? Young love of heroes, rise.

Ros-crana.

My fluttering soul is high! Let me turn from the steps of the king. He has heard my secret voice, and shall my blue eyes roll in his presence? Roe of the hill of moss, toward thy dwelling I move. Meet me, ye breezes of Mora! as I move through the valley of winds. But why should he ascend his ocean? Son of heroes, my soul is thine! My steps shall not move to the desert; the light of Ros-crána is here.

Fingal.

It was the light tread of a ghost, the fair dweller of eddying winds. Why deceivest thou me with thy voice? Here

are ſtrong in battle; when they ſoften at the ſight of the ſad. Thus let my name be renowned, when bards ſhall lighten my riſing ſoul. Carril, ſon of Kinfena! take the bards and raiſe a tomb. To-night let Connal dwell within his narrow houſe. Let not the ſoul of the valiant wander on the winds. Faint glimmers the moon on Moi-lena, through the broad-headed groves of the hill! Raiſe ſtones, beneath its beam, to all the fallen in war. Though no chiefs were they, yet their hands were ſtrong in fight. They were my rock in danger; the mountain from which I ſpread my eagle-wings. Thence am I renowned. Carril forget not the low!"

Loud, at once, from the hundred bards, roſe the ſong of the tomb. Carril ſtrode before them, they are the murmur of ſtreams behind his ſteps.* Silence dwells in the vales of Moi-lena, where each, with its own dark rill, is winding between the hills. I heard the voice of the bards, leſſening, as they moved along. I leaned forward from my ſhield; and felt the kindling of my ſoul. Half-formed, the words

Here let me reſt in ſhades. Shouldſt thou ſtretch thy white arm from thy grove, thou ſun-beam of Cormac of Erin!

ROS-CRANA.

He is gone; and my blue eyes are dim; faint-rolling, in all my tears. But, there, I behold him, alone: king of Selma, my ſoul is thine. Ah me! what clanging of armour! Colc-ulla of Atha is near!

of

of my ſong burſt forth upon the wind. So hears a tree, on the vale, the voice of ſpring around. It pours its green leaves to the ſun. It ſhakes its lonely head. The hum of the mountain bee is near it; the hunter ſees it, with joy, from the blaſted heath.

Young Fillan at a diſtance ſtood. His helmet lay glittering on the ground. His dark hair is looſe to the blaſt. A beam of light is Clatho's ſon! He heard the words of the king, with joy. He leaned forward on his ſpear.

"My ſon," ſaid car-borne Fingal; "I ſaw thy deeds, and my ſoul was glad. The fame of our fathers, I ſaid, burſts from its gathering cloud. Thou art brave, ſon of Clatho! but headlong in the ſtrife. So did not Fingal advance, though he never feared a foe. Let thy people be a ridge behind. They are thy ſtrength in the field. Then ſhalt thou be long renowned, and behold the tombs of the old. The memory of the paſt returns, my deeds in other years: when firſt I deſcended from ocean on the green-valleyed iſle."

We bend towards the voice of the king. The moon looks abroad from her cloud. The grey-ſkirted miſt is near: the dwelling of the ghoſts!

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK IV.

ARGUMENT to Book IV.

The ſecond night continues. Fingal relates, at the feaſt, his own firſt expedition into Ireland, and his marriage with Ros-crána, the daughter of Cormac, king of that iſland. The Iriſh chiefs convene in the preſence of Cathmor. The ſituation of the king deſcribed. The ſtory of Sul-malla, the daughter of Conmor, king of Inis-huna, who, in the diſguiſe of a young warrior, had followed Cathmor to the war. The ſullen behaviour of Foldath, who had commanded in the battle of the preceding day, renews the difference between him and Malthos; but Cathmor, interpoſing, ends it. The chiefs feaſt, and hear the ſong of Fonar the bard. Cathmor returns to reſt, at a diſtance from the army. The ghoſt of his brother Cairbar appears to him in a dream; and obſcurely foretels the iſſue of the war. The ſoliloquy of the king. He diſcovers Sul-malla. Morning comes. Her ſoliloquy cloſes the book.

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK IV.

"BENEATH * an oak," ſaid the king, "I ſat on Selma's ſtreamy rock, when Connal roſe, from the ſea, with the broken ſpear of Duth-caron. Far-diſtant ſtood the youth. He turned away his eyes. He remembered the ſteps of his father, on his own green hills. I darkened in my place. Duſky thoughts flew over my ſoul. The kings of Erin roſe before me. I half-unſheathed the ſword. Slowly approached the chiefs. They lifted up their ſilent eyes. Like a ridge of clouds, they wait for the burſting forth of my voice. My voice was, to them, a wind from heaven, to roll the miſt away.

* This epiſode has an immediate connection with the ſtory of Connal and Duth-caron, in the latter end of the third book. Fingal, ſitting beneath an oak, near the palace of Selma, diſcovers Connal juſt landed from Ireland The danger which threatened Cormac king of Ireland induces him to ſail immediately to that iſland. The ſtory is introduced, by the king, as a pattern for the future behaviour of Fillan, whoſe raſhneſs in the preceding battle is reprimanded.

"I bade my white sails to rise, before the roar of Cona's wind. Three hundred youths looked, from their waves, on Fingal's bossy shield. High on the mast it hung, and marked the dark-blue sea. But when night came down, I struck, at times, the warning boss: I struck, and looked on high, for fiery-haired Ul-erin *. Nor absent was the star of heaven. It travelled red between the clouds. I pursued the lovely beam, on the faint-gleaming deep. With morning, Erin rose in mist. We came in the bay of Moi-lena, where its blue waters tumbled, in the bosom of echoing woods. Here Cormac, in his secret hall, avoids the strength of Colc-ulla. Nor he alone avoids the foe. The blue eye of Ros-crána is there: Ros-crána †, white-handed maid, the daughter of the king!

"Grey, on his pointless spear, came forth the aged steps of Cormac. He smiled, from his waving locks; but grief was in his soul. He saw us few before him, and his sigh arose. "I see the arms of Trenmor," he said; "and

* Ul-erin, *the guide to Ireland*, a star known by that name in the days of Fingal, and very useful to those who sailed, by night, from the Hebrides, or Caledonia, to the coast of Ulster.

† Ros-crána, *the beam of the rising sun*; she was the mother of Ossian. The Irish bards relate strange fictions concerning this princess. Their stories, however, concerning Fingal, if they mean him by *Fion Mac-Commal*, are so inconsistent and notoriously fabulous, that they do not deserve to be mentioned; for they evidently bear, along with them, the marks of late invention.

these

these are the steps of the king! Fingal! thou art a beam of light to Cormac's darkened soul. Early is thy fame, my son: but strong are the foes of Erin. They are like the roar of streams in the land, son of car-borne Comhal!" "Yet they may be rolled * away," I said in my rising soul. "We are not of the race of the feeble, king of blue-shielded hosts! Why should fear come amongst us, like a ghost of night? The soul of the valiant grows, when foes increase in the field. Roll no darkness, king of Erin, on the young in war!"

"The bursting tears of the king came down. He seized my hand in silence. "Race of the daring Trenmor!" at length he said, "I roll no cloud before thee. Thou burnest in the fire of thy fathers. I behold thy fame. It marks thy course in battle, like a stream of light. But wait the coming of Cairbar †; my son must join thy sword. He calls the sons of Erin from all their distant streams."

* Cormac had said that the foes were *like the roar of streams*, and Fingal continues the metaphor. The speech of the young hero is spirited, and consistent with that sedate intrepidity which eminently distinguishes his character throughout.

† Cairbar, the son of Cormac, was afterwards king of Ireland. His reign was short. He was succeeded by his son Artho, the father of that Cormac who was murdered by Cairbar the son of Borbar-duthul. Cairbar, the son of Cormac, long after his son Artho was grown to man's estate, had, by his wife Beltanno, another son, whose name was Ferad-artho. He was the only one remaining of the race of Conar the first king of Ireland, when Fingal's expedition against Cairbar the son of Borbar-duthul happened. See more of Ferad-artho in the eighth book.

"We came to the hall of the king, where it rose in the midst of rocks, on whose dark sides were the marks of streams of old. Broad oaks bend around with their moss. The thick birch is waving near. Half-hid, in her shady grove, Ros-crána raises the song. Her white hands move on the harp. I beheld her blue-rolling eyes. She was like a spirit * of heaven half-folded in the skirt of a cloud!"

* The attitude of Ros-crána is illustrated by this simile; for the ideas of those times, concerning the spirits of the deceased, were not so gloomy and disagreeable, as those of succeeding ages. The spirits of women, it was supposed, retained that beauty, which they possessed while living, and transported themselves, from place to place, with that gliding motion, which Homer ascribes to the gods. The descriptions which poets, less ancient than Ossian, have left us of those beautiful figures, that appeared sometimes on the hills, are elegant and picturesque. They compare them to the *rainbow on streams*; or *the gilding of sun-beams on the hills*.

A chief who lived three centuries ago, returning from the war, understood that his wife or mistress was dead. A bard introduces him speaking the following soliloquy, when he came within sight of the place, where he had left her at his departure.

"My soul darkens in sorrow. I behold not the smoak of my hall. No grey dog bounds at my streams. Silence dwells in the valley of trees.

"Is that a rain-bow on Crunath? It flies: and the sky is dark. Again, thou movest, bright, on the heath, thou sun-beam clothed in a shower! Hah! it is she, my love! her gliding course on the bosom of winds!"

In succeeding times the beauty of Ros-crána passed into a proverb; and the highest compliment that could be paid to a woman, was to compare her person with *the daughter of Cormac*.

'S tu fein an Ros-crána.
Siol Chormacc na n'ioma lan.

"Three

" Three days we feaſted at Moi-lena. She riſes bright in my troubled ſoul. Cormac beheld me dark. He gave the white-boſomed maid. She comes with bending eye, amid the wandering of her heavy locks. She came! Straight the battle roared. Colc-ulla appeared: I took my ſpear. My ſword roſe, with my people, againſt the ridgy foe. Alnecma fled. Colc-ulla fell. Fingal returned with fame."

" Renowned is he, O Fillan, who fights, in the ſtrength of his hoſt. The bard purſues his ſteps, through the land of the foe. But he who fights alone; few are his deeds to other times! He ſhines, to-day, a mighty light. To-morrow, he is low. One ſong contains his fame. His name is on ONE dark field. He is forgot; but where his tomb ſends forth the tufted graſs."

Such are the words of Fingal, on Mora of the roes. Three bards, from the rock of Cormul, pour down the pleaſing ſong. Sleep deſcends, in the ſound, on the broad-ſkirted hoſt. Carril returned, with the bards, from the tomb of Dun-lora's chief. The voice of morning ſhall not come to the duſky bed of Duth-caron. No more ſhalt thou hear the tread of roes around thy narrow houſe!

As roll the troubled clouds, round a meteor of night, when they brighten their ſides, with its light, along the heaving ſea: ſo gathers Erin around the gleaming form of Cathmor. HE, tall in the midſt, careleſs lifts, at times, his ſpear: as ſwells or falls the ſound of Fonar's diſtant

distant harp. Near* him leaned, against a rock, Sul-malla † of blue eyes, the white-bosomed daughter of Conmor, king of Inis-huna. To his aid came blue-shielded Cathmor, and rolled his foes away. Sul-malla beheld him stately in the hall of feasts. Nor careless rolled the eyes of Cathmor on the long-haired maid!

* In order to illustrate this passage, I shall give here, the history on which it is founded, as I have gathered it from tradition. The nation of the Fir-bolg who inhabited the south of Ireland, being originally descended from the Belgæ, who possessed the south and south-west coast of Britain, kept up, for many ages, an amicable correspondence with their mother-country; and sent aid to the British Belgæ, when they were pressed by the Romans or other new-comers from the Continent. Con-mor, king of Inis-huna, (that part of South Britain which is over against the Irish coast,) being attacked, by what enemy is not mentioned, sent for aid to Cairbar, lord of Atha, the most potent chief of the Fir-bolg. Cairbar dispatched his brother Cathmor to the assistance of Con-mor. Cathmor, after various vicissitudes of fortune, put an end to the war, by the total defeat of the enemies of Inis-huna, and returned in triumph to the residence of Con-mor. There, at a feast, Sulmalla, the daughter of Con-mor, fell desperately in love with Cathmor, who, before her passion was disclosed, was recalled to Ireland by his brother Cairbar, upon the news of the intended expedition of Fingal, to re-establish the family of Conar on the Irish throne. The wind being contrary, Cathmor remained, for three days, in a neighbouring bay, during which time Sul-malla disguised herself in the habit of a young warrior, and came to offer him her service in the war: Cathmor accepted of the proposal, sailed for Ireland, and arrived in Ulster a few days before the death of Cairbar.

† Sul-malla, *slowly-rolling eyes.* Caon-mór, *mild and tall.* Inis-huna, *green island.*

The third day aroſe, when Fithil * came, from Erin of the ſtreams. He told of the lifting up of the ſhield † in Selma: he told of the danger of Cairbar. Cathmor raiſed the ſail at Cluba; but the winds were in other lands. Three days he remained on the coaſt, and turned his eyes on Conmor's halls. He remembered the daughter of ſtrangers, and his ſigh aroſe. Now when the winds awaked the wave: from the hill came a youth in arms; to lift the ſword with Cathmor, in his echoing fields.

* Fithil, *an inferior bard.* It may either be taken here for the proper name of a man, or in the literal ſenſe, as the bards were the heralds and meſſengers of thoſe times. Cathmor, it is probable, was abſent, when the rebellion of his brother Cairbar, and the aſſaſſination of Cormac, king of Ireland, happened. Cathmor and his followers had only arrived, from Inis-huna, three days before the death of Cairbar, which ſufficiently clears his character from any imputation of being concerned in the conſpiracy with his brother.

† The ceremony which was uſed by Fingal, when he prepared for an expedition, is related thus in tradition: A bard, at midnight, went to the hall where the tribes feaſted upon ſolemn occaſions, raiſed the *war ſong*, and thrice called the ſpirits of their deceaſed anceſtors to come, *on their clouds*, to behold the actions of their children. He then fixed the *ſhield of Trenmor*, on a tree on the rock of Selma, ſtriking it, at times, with the blunt end of a ſpear, and ſinging the war ſong between. Thus he did, for three ſucceſſive nights, and, in the mean time, meſſengers were diſpatched to call together the tribes; or, to uſe an ancient expreſſion, *to call them from all their ſtreams.* This phraſe alludes to the ſituation of the reſidences of the clans, which were generally fixed in valleys, where the torrents of the neighbouring mountains were collected into one body, and became *large ſtreams* or rivers. *The lifting up of the ſhield*, was the phraſe for beginning a war.

fields. It was the white-armed Sul-malla. Secret ſhe dwelt beneath her helmet. Her ſteps were in the path of the king: on him her blue eyes rolled with joy, when he lay by his roaring ſtreams! But Cathmor thought, that, on Lumon, ſhe ſtill purſued the roes. He thought, that fair on a rock, ſhe ſtretched her white hand to the wind; to feel its courſe from Erin, the green dwelling of her love. He had promiſed to return, with his white-boſomed ſails. The maid is near thee, O Cathmor! leaning on her rock.

The tall forms of the chiefs ſtand around; all but dark-browned Foldath *. He leaned againſt a diſtant tree, rolled into his haughty ſoul. His buſhy hair whiſtles in wind. At times, burſts the hum of a ſong. He ſtruck the tree, at length, in wrath; and ruſhed before the king! Calm and ſtately, to the beam of the oak, aroſe the form of young Hidalla. His hair falls round his bluſhing cheek, in wreaths of waving light. Soft was his voice in Clon-ra †, in the valley of his fathers. Soft was his voice when he touched the harp, in the hall, near his roaring ſtreams!

* The ſurly attitude of Foldath is a proper preamble to his after-behaviour. Chaffed with the diſappointment of the victory which he promiſed himſelf, he becomes paſſionate and overbearing. The quarrel which ſucceeds between him and Malthos, is introduced to raiſe the character of Cathmor, whoſe ſuperior worth ſhines forth, in his manly manner of ending the difference between the chiefs.

† Claon-rath, *winding field*. The *th* are ſeldom pronounced audibly in the Galic language.

"King

"King of Erin," ſaid Hidalla, "now is the time to feaſt. Bid the voice of bards ariſe. Bid them roll the night away. The ſoul returns, from ſong, more terrible to war. Darkneſs ſettles on Erin. From hill to hill bend the ſkirted clouds. Far and grey, on the heath, the dreadful ſtrides of ghoſts are ſeen: the ghoſts of thoſe who fell bend forward to their ſong. Bid, O Cathmor! the harps to riſe, to brighten the dead, on their wandering blaſts."

"Be all the dead forgot," ſaid Foldath's burſting wrath. "Did not I fail in the field? Shall I then hear the ſong? Yet was not my courſe harmleſs in war. Blood was a ſtream around my ſteps. But the feeble were behind me. The foe has eſcaped from my ſword. In Clon-ra's vale touch thou the harp. Let Dura anſwer to the voice of Hidalla. Let ſome maid look from the wood, on thy long, yellow locks. Fly from Lubar's echoing plain. This is the field of heroes!"

"King of Erin *," Malthos ſaid, "it is THINE to lead in war. THOU art a fire to our eyes, on the dark-brown field. Like a blaſt THOU haſt paſt over hoſts. THOU haſt laid them low in blood. But who has heard THY words returning from the field? The wrathful delight in death: their remembrance reſts on the wounds of their ſpear. Strife is folded

* This ſpeech of Malthos is, throughout, a ſevere reprimand to the bluſtering behaviour of Foldath.

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in THEIR thoughts: THEIR words are ever heard. Thy courſe, chief of Moma, was like a troubled ſtream. The dead were rolled on thy path: but others alſo lift the ſpear. WE were not feeble behind thee; but the foe was ſtrong."

Cathmor beheld the riſing rage, and bending forward of either chief: for, half-unſheathed, they held their ſwords, and rolled their ſilent eyes. Now would they have mixed in horrid fray, had not the wrath of Cathmor burned. He drew his ſword: it gleamed through night, to the high-flaming oak! "Sons of pride," ſaid the king, "allay your ſwelling ſouls. Retire in night. Why ſhould MY rage ariſe? Should I contend with both in arms? It is no time for ſtrife! Retire, ye clouds, at my feaſt. Awake my ſoul no more."

They ſunk from the king on either ſide; like * two columns of morning miſt, when the ſun riſes, between them, on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on either ſide; each toward its reedy pool!

Silent ſat the chiefs at the feaſt. They look, at times, on Atha's king, where he ſtrode, on

* This compariſon is favourable to the ſuperiority of Cathmor over his two chiefs. I ſhall illuſtrate this paſſage with another from a fragment of an ancient poem, juſt now in my hands. "As the ſun is above the vapours, which his beams have raiſed; ſo is the ſoul of the king above the ſons of fear They roll, dark below him; he rejoices in the robe of his beams. But when feeble deeds wander on the ſoul of the king, he is a darkened ſun rolled along the ſky: the valley is ſad below: flowers wither beneath the drops of the night."

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his rock, amid his settling soul. The host lie, along the field. Sleep descends on Moi-lena. The voice of Fonar ascends alone, beneath his distant tree. It ascends in the praise of Cathmor, son of Larthon * of Lumon. But Cathmor did not hear his praise. He lay at the roar of a stream. The rustling breeze of night flew over his whistling locks.

His brother came to his dreams, half-seen from his low-hung cloud. Joy rose darkly in his face. He had heard the song of Carril †. A blast

* Lear-thon, *sea-wave*, the name of the chief of that colony of the Fir-bolg, which first migrated into Ireland. Larthon's first settlement in that country is related in the seventh book. He was the ancestor of Cathmor; and is here called *Larthon of Lumon*, from a high hill of that name in Inis-huna, the ancient seat of the Fir-bolg. The character of Cathmor is preserved. He had mentioned, in the first book, the aversion of that chief to praise, and we find him here lying at the side of a stream, that the noise of it might drown the voice of Fonar, who, according to the custom of the times, sung his eulogium in his *evening-song*. Though other chiefs, as well as Cathmor, might be averse to hear their own praise, we find it the universal policy of the times, to allow the bards to be as extravagant as they pleased in their encomiums on the leaders of armies, in the presence of their people. The vulgar, who had no great ability to judge for themselves, received the characters of their princes entirely upon the faith of their bards.

† Carril, the son of Kinfena, by the orders of Ossian, sung the funeral elegy at the tomb of Cairbar. See the second book towards the end. In all these poems, the visits of ghosts, to their living friends, are short, and their language obscure, both which circumstances tend to throw a solemn gloom on these supernatural scenes. Towards

A blaſt ſuſtained his dark-ſkirted cloud; which he ſeized in the boſom of night, as he roſe, with his fame, towards his airy hall. Half-mixed with the noiſe of the ſtream, he poured his feeble words.

"Joy meet the ſoul of Cathmor. His voice was heard on Moi-lena. The bard gave his ſong to Cairbar. He travels on the wind. My form is in my father's hall, like the gliding of a terrible light, which darts acroſs the deſert, in a ſtormy night. No bard ſhall be wanting at thy tomb, when thou art lowly laid. The ſons of ſong love the valiant. Cathmor, thy name is a pleaſant gale. The mournful ſounds ariſe! On Lubar's field there is a voice! Louder ſtill, ye ſhadowy ghoſts! The dead were full of fame! Shrilly ſwells the feeble ſound. The rougher blaſt alone is heard! Ah! ſoon is Cathmor low!" Rolled into himſelf he flew, wide on the boſom of winds. The old oak felt his departure, and ſhook its whiſtling head. Cathmor ſtarts from reſt. He takes his deathful ſpear. He lifts his eyes around. He ſees but dark-ſkirted night.

Towards the latter end of the ſpeech of the ghoſt of Cairbar, he foretels the death of Cathmor, by enumerating thoſe ſignals, which, according to the opinion of the times, preceded the death of a perſon renowned. It was thought that the ghoſts of deceaſed bards ſung, for three nights preceding the death (near the place where his tomb was to be raiſed) round an unſubſtantial figure which repreſented the body of the perſon who was to die.

"It was the voice of the king," he ſaid.* "But now his form is gone. Unmarked is your path in the air, ye children of the night. Often, like a reflected beam, are ye ſeen in the deſert wild: but ye retire in your blaſts, before our ſteps approach. Go then, ye feeble race! Knowledge with you there is none! Your joys are weak, and like the dreams of our reſt, or the light-winged thought, that flies acroſs the ſoul. Shall Cathmor ſoon be low? Darkly laid in his narrow houſe? Where no morning comes, with her half-opened eyes? Away, thou ſhade! to fight is mine! All further thought away! I ruſh forth, on eagle's wings, to ſeize my beam of fame. In the lonely vale of ſtreams, abides the narrow † ſoul.

* The ſoliloquy of Cathmor ſuits the magnanimity of his character. Though ſtaggered at firſt with the prediction of Cairbar's ghoſt, he ſoon comforts himſelf with the agreeable proſpect of his future renown; and, like Achilles, prefers a ſhort and glorious life, to an obſcure length of years in retirement and eaſe.

† An indolent and unwarlike life was held in extreme contempt. Whatever a philoſopher may ſay, in praiſe of quiet and retirement, I am far from thinking, but they weaken and debaſe the human mind. When the faculties of the ſoul are not exerted, they loſe their vigour, and low and circumſcribed notions take the place of noble and enlarged ideas. Action, on the contrary, and the viciſſitudes of fortune which attend it, call forth, by turns, all the powers of the mind, and, by exerciſing, ſtrengthen them. Hence it is, that in great and opulent ſtates, when property and indolence are ſecured to individuals, we ſeldom meet with that ſtrength of mind, which is ſo common in a nation, not far advanced in civilization. It is a curi-

soul. Years roll on, seasons return, but he is still unknown. In a blast comes cloudy death, and lays his grey head low. His ghost is folded in the vapour of the fenny field. Its course is never on hills, nor mossy vales of wind. So shall not Cathmor depart. No boy in the field was he, who only marks the bed of roes, upon the echoing hills. My issuing forth was with kings. My joy in dreadful plains: where broken hosts are rolled away, like seas before the wind."

So spoke the king of Alnecma, brightening in his rising soul. Valour, like a pleasant flame, is gleaming within his breast. Stately is his stride on the heath! The beam of east is poured around. He saw his grey host on the field, wide-spreading their ridges in light. He rejoiced, like a spirit of heaven, whose steps come forth on the seas, when he beholds them peaceful round, and all the winds are laid. But soon he awakes the waves, and rolls them large to some echoing shore.

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ous, but just, observation, that great kingdoms seldom produce great characters, which must be altogether attributed to that indolence and dissipation, which are the inseparable companions of too much property and security. Rome, it is certain, had more real great men within it, when its power was confined within the narrow bounds of Latium, than when its dominion extended over all the known world; and one petty state of the Saxon heptarchy had, perhaps, as much genuine spirit in it, as the two British kingdoms united. As a state, we are much more powerful than our ancestors, but we should lose by comparing individuals with them.

On the rushy bank of a stream, slept the daughter of Inis-huna. The helmet had fallen from her head. Her dreams were in the lands of her fathers. There morning is on the field. Grey streams leap down from the rocks. The breezes, in shadowy waves, fly over the rushy fields. There is the sound that prepares for the chase. There the moving of warriors from the hall. But tall above the rest is seen the hero of streamy Atha. He bends his eye of love on Sul-malla, from his stately steps. She turns, with pride, her face away, and careless bends the bow.

Such were the dreams of the maid, when Cathmor of Atha came. He saw her fair face before him, in the midst of her wandering locks. He knew the maid of Lumon. What should Cathmor do? His sighs arise. His tears come down. But straight he turns away. "This is no time, king of Atha, to awake thy secret soul. The battle is rolled before thee, like a troubled stream."

He struck that warning boss *, wherein dwelt the voice of war. Erin rose around him, like the sound of eagle-wing. Sul-malla started from sleep, in her disordered

* In order to understand this passage, it is necessary to look to the description of Cathmor's shield in the seventh book. This shield had seven principal bosses, the sound of each of which, when struck with a spear, conveyed a particular order from the king to his tribes. The sound of one of them, as here, was the signal for the army to assemble.

locks. She ſeized the helmet from earth. She trembled in her place. "Why ſhould they know in Erin of the daughter of Inis-huna?" She remembered the race of kings. The pride of her ſoul aroſe! Her ſteps are behind a rock, by the blue-winding * ſtream of a vale: where dwelt the dark-brown hind ere yet the war aroſe. Thither came the voice of Cathmor, at times, to Sul-malla's ear. Her ſoul is darkly ſad. She pours her words on wind.

"The dreams of Inis-huna departed. They are diſperſed from my ſoul. I hear not the chaſe in my land. I am concealed in the ſkirt of war. I look forth from my cloud. No beam appears to light my path. I behold my warrior low; for the broad-ſhielded king is near, he that overcomes in danger, Fingal from Selma of ſpears! Spirit of departed Conmor! are thy ſteps on the boſom of winds? Comeſt thou, at times, to other lands, father of ſad Sul-malla? Thou doſt come! I have heard thy voice at night; while yet I roſe on the wave to Erin of the ſtreams. The ghoſt of fathers, they ſay †, call away the ſouls of their race,

* This was not the valley of Lona to which Sul-malla afterwards retired.

† Con-mor, the father of Sul-malla, was killed in that war, from which Cathmor delivered Inis-huna. Lormar his ſon ſucceeded Conmor. It was the opinion of the times, when a perſon was reduced to a pitch of miſery, which could admit of no alleviation, that the ghoſt of his anceſtors *called his ſoul away*. This ſupernatural kind of

race, while they behold them lonely in the midst of woe. Call me, my father, away! When Cathmor is low on earth; then shall Sul-malla be lonely in the midst of woe!

of death was called *the voice of the dead*; and is believed by the superstitious vulgar to this day.

There is no people in the world, perhaps, who give more universal credit to apparitions, and the visits of the ghosts of the deceased to their friends, than the ancient Scots. This is to be attributed as much, at least, to the situation of the country they possess, as to that credulous disposition which distinguishes an unenlightened people. As their business was feeding of cattle, in dark and extensive deserts, so their journeys lay over wide and unfrequented heaths, where, often, they were obliged to sleep in the open air, amidst the whistling of winds, and roar of water-falls. The gloominess of the scenes around them was apt to beget that melancholy disposition of mind, which most readily receives impressions of the extraordinary and supernatural kind. Falling asleep in this gloomy mood, and their dreams being disturbed by the noise of the elements around, it is no matter of wonder, that they thought they heard the *voice of the dead*. This *voice of the dead*, however, was, perhaps, no more than a shriller whistle of the winds in an old tree, or in the chinks of a neighbouring rock. It is to this cause I ascribe those many and improbable tales of ghosts, which we meet with in the Highlands; for, in other respects, we do not find that the inhabitants are more credulous than their neighbours.

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK V.

ARGUMENT to Book V.

The poet, after a ſhort addreſs to the harp of Cona, deſcribes the arrangement of both armies on either ſide of the river Lubar. Fingal gives the command to Fillan; but, at the ſame time, orders Gaul, the ſon of Morni, who had been wounded in the hand in the preceding battle, to aſſiſt him with his counſel. The army of the Fir-bolg is commanded by Foldath. The general onſet is deſcribed. The great actions of Fillan. He kills Rothmar and Culmin. But when Fillan conquers in one wing, Foldath preſſes hard on the other. He wounds Dermid, the ſon of Duthno, and puts the whole wing to flight. Dermid deliberates with himſelf, and, at laſt, reſolves to put a ſtop to the progreſs of Foldath, by engaging him in ſingle combat. When the two chiefs were approaching towards one another, Fillan came ſuddenly to the relief of Dermid; engaged Foldath, and killed him. The behaviour of Malthos towards the fallen Foldath. Fillan puts the whole army of the Fir-bolg to flight. The book cloſes with an addreſs to Clatho, the mother of that hero.

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK V.

THOU dweller between the ſhields, that hang, on high, in Oſſian's hall! Deſcend from thy place, O harp, and let me hear thy voice! Son of Alpin, ſtrike the ſtring. Thou muſt awake the ſoul of the bard. The murmur of Lora's * ſtream has rolled the tale away. I ſtand in the cloud of years. Few are its openings toward the paſt; and when the viſion comes, it is but dim and dark. I hear thee, harp of Selma! my ſoul returns, like a breeze, which the ſun brings back to the vale, where dwelt the lazy miſt!

Lubar † is bright before me in the windings of its vale. On either ſide, on their hills, riſe the

* Lora is often mentioned; it was a ſmall and rapid ſtream in the neighbourhood of Selma. There is no veſtige of this name now remaining; though it appears from a very old ſong, which the tranſlator has ſeen, that one of the ſmall rivers on the north-weſt coaſt was called Lora ſome centuries ago.

† From ſeveral paſſages in the poem we may form a diſtinct idea of the ſcene of the action of Temora. At a ſmall

the tall forms of the kings. Their people are poured around them, bending forward to their words: as if their fathers ſpoke deſcending from the winds. But they themſelves are like two rocks in the midſt; each with its dark head of pines, when they are ſeen in the deſert, above low-ſailing miſt. High on their face are ſtreams, which ſpread their foam on blaſts of wind!

Beneath the voice of Cathmor pours Erin, like the ſound of flame. Wide they come down to Lubar. Before them is the ſtride of Foldath. But Cathmor retires to his hill, beneath his bending oak. The tumbling of a ſtream is near the king. He lifts, at times, his gleaming ſpear. It is a flame to his people, in the midſt of war. Near him ſtands the daughter of Con-mor, leaning on a rock. She

ſmall diſtance from one another roſe the hills of Mora and Lora; the firſt poſſeſſed by Fingal, the ſecond by the army of Cathmor. Through the intermediate plain ran the ſmall river Lubar, on the banks of which all the battles were fought, excepting that between Cairbar and Oſcar, related in the firſt book. This laſt mentioned engagement happened to the north of the hill of Mora, of which Fingal took poſſeſſion, after the army of Cairbar fell back to that of Cathmor. At ſome diſtance, but within ſight of Mora, towards the weſt, Lubar iſſued from the mountain of Crommal, and, after a ſhort courſe through the plain of Moi-lena, diſcharged itſelf into the ſea near the field of battle. Behind the mountain of Crommal ran the ſmall ſtream of Lavath, on the banks of which Feradartho, the ſon of Cairbre, the only perſon remaining of the race of Cona, lived concealed in a cave, during the uſurpation of Cairbar, the ſon of Borbal-duthul.

did

did not rejoice at the ſtrife. Her ſoul delighted not in blood. A * valley ſpreads green behind the hill, with its three blue ſtreams. The ſun is there in ſilence. The dun mountain-roes come down. On theſe are turned the eyes of Sul-malla in her thoughtful mood.

Fingal beholds Cathmor, on high, the ſon of Borbar-duthul! he beholds the deep-rolling of Erin, on the darkened plain. He ſtrikes that warning boſs, which bids the people to obey, when he ſends his chiefs before them, to the field of renown. Wide riſe their ſpears to the ſun. Their echoing ſhields reply around. Fear, like a vapour, winds not among the hoſt: for HE, THE KING, is near, the ſtrength of ſtreamy Selma. Gladneſs brightens the hero. We hear his words with joy.

" Like the coming forth of winds, is the ſound of Selma's ſons! They are mountain waters, determined in their courſe. Hence is Fingal renowned. Hence is his name in other lands. He was not a lonely beam in danger; for your ſteps were always near! But never was Fingal a dreadful form, in your preſence, darkened into wrath. My voice was no thunder to your ears. Mine eyes ſent forth no death. When the haughty appeared, I beheld them not. They were forgot at my feaſts. Like miſts they melted away. A young beam

* It was to this valley Sul-malla retired, during the laſt and deciſive battle between Fingal and Cathmor. It is deſcribed in the ſeventh book, where it is called the vale of Lona, and the reſidence of a Druid.

is before you! Few are his paths to war! They are few, but he is valiant. Defend my dark-haired ſon. Bring Fillan back with joy. Hereafter he may ſtand alone. His form is like his fathers. His ſoul is a flame of their fire. Son of car-borne Morni, move behind the youth. Let thy voice reach his ear, from the ſkirts of war. Not unobſerved rolls battle, before thee, breaker of the ſhields!"

The king ſtrode, at once, away to Cormul's lofty rock. Intermitting, darts the light, from his ſhield, as ſlow the king of heroes moves. Sidelong rolls his eye o'er the heath, as forming advance the lines. Graceful fly his half-grey locks round his kingly features, now lightened with dreadful joy. Wholly mighty is the chief! Behind him dark and ſlow I moved. Straight came forward the ſtrength of Gaul. His ſhield hung looſe on its thong. He ſpoke, in haſte, to Oſſian. "Bind *, ſon of Fingal, this ſhield! Bind it high to the ſide of Gaul. The foe may behold it, and think I lift the ſpear. If I ſhould fall, let my tomb be hid in the field; for fall I muſt without fame. Mine arm cannot lift the ſteel. Let not Evir-choma hear it, to bluſh between her locks. Fillan, the mighty behold us! Let us not forget the ſtrife. Why ſhould THEY come, from their hills, to aid our flying field?"

* It is neceſſary to remember, that Gaul was wounded; which occaſions his requiring here the aſſiſtance of Oſſian to bind his ſhield on his ſide.

He ſtrode onward, with the ſound of his ſhield. My voice purſued him as he went. " Can the ſon of Morni fall, without his fame in Erin? But the deeds of the mighty are forgot by themſelves. They ruſh careleſs over the fields of renown. Their words are never heard!" I rejoiced over the ſteps of the chief. I ſtrode to the rock of the king, where he ſat, in his wandering locks, amid the mountain-wind!

In two dark ridges bend the hoſts, toward each other, at Lubar. Here Foldath riſes a pillar of darkneſs: there brightens the youth of Fillan. Each, with his ſpear in the ſtream, ſent forth the voice of war. Gaul ſtruck the ſhield of Selma. At once they plunge in battle! Steel pours its gleam on ſteel: like the fall of ſtreams ſhone the field, when they mix their foam together, from two dark-browed rocks! Behold he comes, the ſon of fame! He lays the people low! Deaths ſit on blaſts around him! Warriors ſtrew thy paths, O Fillan!

Rothmar *, the ſhield of warriors, ſtood between two chinky rocks. Two oaks, which winds had bent from high, ſpread their branches on either ſide. He rolls his darkening eyes on Fillan, and, ſilent, ſhades his friends. Fingal ſaw the approaching fight. The hero's ſoul aroſe. But as the ſtone of

* Roth-mar, *the ſound of the ſea before a ſtorm*. Drumanard *high-ridge*. Culmin, *ſoft-haired*. Cul-allin, *beautiful locks*. Strutha, *ſtreamy river*.

Loda * falls, shook, at once, from rocking Druman-ard, when ſpirits heave the earth in their wrath; ſo fell blue-ſhielded Rothmar.

Near are the ſteps of Culmin. The youth came, burſting into tears. Wrathful he cut the wind, ere yet he mixed his ſtrokes with Fillan. He had firſt bent the bow with Rothmar, at the rock of his own blue ſtreams. There they had marked the place of the roe, as the ſun-beam flew over the fern. Why, ſon of Cul-allin! Why, Culmin, doſt thou ruſh on that beam † of light? It is a fire that conſumes.

* By the ſtone of Loda is meant a place of worſhip among the Scandinavians. The Caledonians, in their many expeditions to Orkney and Scandinavia, became acquainted with ſome of the rites of the religion which prevailed in thoſe countries, and the ancient poetry frequently alludes to them. There are ſome ruins, and circular pales of ſtones, remaining ſtill in Orkney, and the iſlands of Shetland, which retain, to this day, the name of *Loda* or *Loden*. They ſeem to have differed materially, in their conſtruction, from thoſe Druidical monuments which remain in Britain, and the weſtern iſles. The places of worſhip among the Scandinavians were originally rude and unadorned. In after ages, when they opened a communication with other nations, they adopted their manners, and built temples. That at Upſal, in Sweden, was amazingly rich and magnificent. Harquin, of Norway, built one, near Drontheim, little inferior to the former; and it went always under the name of Loden. *Mallet, introduction à l'hiſtoire de Dannemarc.*

† The poet, metaphorically, calls Fillan a beam of light. Culmin, mentioned here, was the ſon of Clonmar, chief of Strutha, by the beautiful Cul-allin. She was ſo remarkable for the beauty of her perſon, that ſhe is introduced, frequently, in the ſimilies and alluſions of ancient poetry. *Mar Chulaluin Strutha nan ſian; Lovely as Cul-allin of Strutha of the ſtorms.*

fumes. Son of Cul-allin, retire. Your fathers were not equal, in the glittering ftrife of the field. The mother of Culmin remains in the hall. She looks forth on blue-rolling Strutha. A whirlwind rifes, on the ftream, dark-eddying round the ghoft of her fon. His dogs * are howling in their place. His fhield is bloody in the hall. "Art thou fallen, my fair haired fon, in Erin's difmal war?"

As a roe, pierced in fecret, lies panting, by her wonted ftreams; the hunter furveys her feet of wind? He remembers her ftately bounding before. So lay the fon of Cul-allin beneath the eye of Fillan. His hair is rolled in a little ftream. His blood wanders on his fhield. Still his hand holds the fword, that failed him in the midft of danger. "Thou art fallen," faid Fillan, "ere yet thy fame was heard. Thy father fent thee to war. He expects to hear of thy deeds. He is grey, perhaps, at his ftreams. His eyes are toward

* Dogs were thought to be fenfible of the death of their mafter, let it happen at ever fo great diftance. It was alfo the opinion of the times, that the arms which warriors left at home became bloody, when they themfelves fell in battle. It was from thofe figns that Cul-allin is fuppofed to underftand that her fon is killed; in which fhe is confirmed by the appearance of his ghoft. Her fudden and fhort exclamation is more judicious in the poet, than if fhe had extended her complaints to a greater length. The attitude of the fallen youth, and Fillan's reflections over him, come forcibly back on the mind, when we confider, that the fuppofed fituation of the father of Culmin, was fo fimilar to that of Fingal, after the death of Fillan himfelf.

Moi-lena. But thou ſhalt not return with the ſpoil of the fallen foe!"

Fillan pours the flight of Erin before him, over the reſounding heath. But, man on man, fell Morven before the dark-red rage of Foldath: for, far on the field, he poured the roar of half his tribes. Dermid ſtands before him in wrath. The ſons of Selma gathered around. But his ſhield is cleft by Foldath. His people fly over the heath.

Then ſaid the foe, in his pride, "They have fled. My fame begins! Go, Malthos, go bid Cathmor guard the dark-rolling of ocean; that Fingal may not eſcape from my ſword. He muſt lie on earth. Beſide ſome fen ſhall his tomb be ſeen. It ſhall riſe without a ſong. His ghoſt ſhall hover, in miſt, over the reedy pool."

Malthos heard, with darkening doubt. He rolled his ſilent eyes. He knew the pride of Foldath. He looked up to Fingal on his hills: then darkly turning, in doubtful mood, he plunged his ſword in war.

In Clono's * narrow vale, where bend two trees above the ſtream, dark, in his grief, ſtood Duthno's

* This valley had its name from Clono, ſon of Lethmal of Lora, one of the anceſtors of Dermid, the ſon of Duthno. His hiſtory is thus related in an old poem. In the days of Conar, the ſon of Trenmor, the firſt king of Ireland, Clono paſſed over into that kingdom, from Caledonia, to aid Conar againſt the Fir-bolg. Being remarkable for the beauty of his perſon, he ſoon drew the attention of Sulmin, the young wife of an Iriſh chief. She diſcloſed

Duthno's ſilent ſon. The blood pours from the ſide of Dermid. His ſhield is broken near. His ſpear leans againſt a ſtone. Why, Dermid, why ſo ſad? "I hear the roar of battle.

diſcloſed her paſſion, which was not properly returned by the Caledonian. The lady ſickened, throughdiſappointment, and her love for Clono came to the ears of her huſband. Fired with jealouſy, he vowed revenge. Clono, to avoid his rage, departed from Temora, in order to paſs over into Scotland; and, being benighted in the valley mentioned here, he laid him down to ſleep. *There Lethmal deſcended in the dreams of Clono, and told him that danger was near.*

Ghoſt of Lethmal.

"Ariſe from thy bed of moſs; ſon of low-laid Lethmal, ariſe. The ſound of the coming of foes, deſcends along the wind.

Clono.

"Whoſe voice is that, like many ſtreams, in the ſeaſon of my reſt?

Ghoſt of Lethmal.

"Ariſe, thou dweller of the ſouls of the lovely; ſon of Lethmal, ariſe.

Clono.

"How dreary is the night! The moon is darkened in the ſky; red are the paths of ghoſts along its ſullen face! Green-ſkirted meteors ſet around. Dull is the roaring of ſtreams, from the valley of dim forms. I hear thee, ſpirit of my father, on the eddying courſe of the wind. I hear thee; but thou bendeſt not, forward, thy tall form, from the ſkirts of night."

As Clono prepared to depart, the huſband of Sulmin came up, with his numerous attendants. Clono defended

battle. My people are alone. My ſteps are ſlow on the heath; and no ſhield is mine. Shall he then prevail? It is then after Dermid is ſlow! I will call thee forth, O Foldath! and meet thee yet in fight."

He took his ſpear, with dreadful joy. The ſon of Morni came. "Stay, ſon of Duthno, ſtay thy ſpeed. Thy ſteps are marked with blood. No boſſy ſhield is thine. Why ſhouldſt thou fall unarmed?" "Son of Morni! give thou thy ſhield. It has often rolled back the war. I ſhall ſtop the chief in his courſe. Son of Morni! behold that ſtone! It lifts its grey head through graſs. There dwells a chief of the race of Dermid. Place me there in night."

He ſlowly roſe againſt the hill. He ſaw the troubled field: the gleaming ridges of battle, disjoined and broken round. As diſtant fires, on heath by night, now ſeem as loſt in ſmoak; now rearing their red ſtreams on the hill, as blow or ceaſe the winds: ſo met the intermitting war the eye of broad-ſhielded Dermid. Through the hoſt are the ſtrides of Foldath, like ſome dark ſhip on wintry waves,

himſelf, but, after a gallant reſiſtance, he was overpowered and ſlain. He was buried in the place where he was killed, and the valley was called after his name. Dermid, in his requeſt to Gaul the ſon of Morni, which immediately follows this paragraph, alludes to the tomb of Clono, and his own connection with that unfortunate chief.

when ſhe iſſues from between two iſles, to ſport on reſounding ocean!

Dermid, with rage, beholds his courſe. He ſtrives to ruſh along. But he fails amid his ſteps; and the big tear comes down. He ſounds his father's horn. He thrice ſtrikes his boſſy ſhield. He calls thrice the name of Foldath, from his roaring tribes. Foldath, with joy, beholds the chief. He lifts aloft his bloody ſpear. As a rock is marked with ſtreams, that fell troubled down its ſide in a ſtorm; ſo, ſtreaked with wandering blood, is the dark chief of Moma! The hoſt, on either ſide, withdraw from the contending of kings. They raiſe, at once, their gleaming points. Ruſhing comes Fillan of Selma. Three paces back Foldath withdraws, dazzled with that beam of light, which came, as iſſuing from a cloud, to ſave the wounded chief. Growing in his pride he ſtands. He calls forth all his ſteel.

As meet two broad-winged eagles, in their ſounding ſtrife, in winds: ſo ruſh the two chiefs on Moi-lena, into gloomy fight. By turns are the ſteps of the kings * forward on their rocks above; for now the duſky war ſeems to deſcend on their ſwords. Cathmor feels the joy of warriors, on his moſſy hill: their joy in ſecret, when dangers riſe to match their ſouls. His eye is not turned on Lubar, but on Selma's dreadful king. He beholds him, on Mora, riſing in his arms.

* Fingal and Cathmor.

Foldath * falls on his ſhield. The ſpear of Fillan pierced the king. Nor looks the youth on the fallen, but onward rolls the war. The hundred voices of death ariſe. "Stay, ſon of Fingal, ſtay thy ſpeed. Beholdeſt thou not that gleaming form, a dreadful ſign of death? Awaken not the king of Erin. Return, ſon of blue-eyed Clatho."

* The fall of Foldath, if we may believe tradition, was predicted to him, before he had left his own country to join Cairbar, in his deſigns on the Iriſh throne. He went to the cave of Moma, to inquire of the ſpirits of his fathers, concerning the ſucceſs of the enterpriſe of Cairbar. The reſponſes of oracles are always attended with obſcurity, and liable to a double meaning: Foldath, therefore, put a favourable interpretation on the prediction, and purſued his adopted plan of aggrandiſing himſelf with the family of Atha.

FOLDATH, *addreſſing the ſpirits of his fathers.*

"Dark, I ſtand in your preſence; fathers of Foldath, hear. Shall my ſteps paſs over Atha, to Ullin of the roes?

The Anſwer.

"Thy ſteps ſhall paſs over Atha, to the green dwelling of kings. There ſhall thy ſtature ariſe, over the fallen, like a pillar of thunder-clouds. There, terrible in darkneſs, ſhalt thou ſtand, till the *reflected beam*, or *Clon-cath* of Moruth, come; Moruth of many ſtreams, that roars in diſtant lands."

Cloncath, or *reflected beam*, ſay my traditional authors, was the name of the ſword of Fillan; ſo that it was in the latent ſignification of the word *Cloncath*, that the deception lay. My principal reaſon for introducing this note, is, that this tradition ſerves to ſhew, that the religion of the Fir-bolg differed from that of the Caledonians, as we never find the latter inquiring of the ſpirits of their deceaſed anceſtors.

"Malthos

"Malthos * beholds Foldath low. He darkly ſtands above the chief. Hatred is rolled from his ſoul. He ſeems a rock in a deſert, on whoſe dark ſide are the trickling of waters; when the ſlow-ſailing miſt has left it, and all its trees are blaſted with winds. He ſpoke to the dying hero, about the narrow houſe. "Whither ſhall thy grey ſtone riſe in Ullin, or in Moma's † woody land? where the ſun looks, in ſecret, on the blue ſtreams of Dal-rutho ‡? There are the ſteps of thy daughter, blue-eyed Dardu-lena!"

"Remembereſt thou her," ſaid Foldath, "becauſe no ſon is mine: no youth to roll

* The characters of Foldath and Malthos are ſuſtained. They were both dark and ſurly, but each in a different way. Foldath was impetuous and cruel: Malthos, ſtubborn and incredulous. Their attachment to the family of Atha was equal; their bravery in battle the ſame. Foldath was vain and oſtentatious: Malthos, unindulgent but generous. His behaviour here, towards his enemy Foldath, ſhews that a good heart often lies concealed under a gloomy and ſullen character.

† Moma was the name of a country, in the ſouth of Connaught, once famous for being the reſidence of an Arch-Druid. The cave of Moma was thought to be inhabited by the ſpirits of the chiefs of the Fir-bolg, and their poſterity ſent to inquire there, as to an oracle, concerning the iſſue of their wars.

‡ Dal-rhuäth, *parched or ſandy field.* The etymology of Dar-dulena is uncertain. The daughter of Foldath was, probably, ſo called, from a place in Ulſter, where her father had defeated part of the adherents of Artho, king of Ireland. Dor-dulena; *the dark wood of Moi-lena.* As Foldath was proud and oſtentatious, it would appear, that he transferred the name of a place, where he himſelf had been victorious, to his daughter.

the battle before him, in revenge of me? Malthos, I am revenged. I was not peaceful in the field. Raise the tombs of those I have slain, around my narrow house. Often shall I forsake the blast, to rejoice above their graves; when I behold them spread around, with their long whistling grass."

His soul rushed to the vale of Moma, to Dardu-lena's dreams, where she slept, by Dalruthe's stream, returning from the chase of the hinds. Her bow is near the maid, unstrung. The breezes fold her long hair on her breasts. Clothed in the beauty of youth, the love of heroes lay. Dark-bending, from the skirts of the wood, her wounded father seemed to come. He appeared, at times, then hid himself in mist. Bursting into tears she rose. She knew that the chief was low. To her came a beam from his soul, when folded in its storms. Thou wert the last of his race, O blue-eyed Dardu-lena.

Wide-spreading over echoing Lubar, the flight of Bolgar is rolled along. Fillan hangs forward on their steps. He strews, with dead, the heath. Fingal rejoices over his son. Blue-shielded Cathmor rose *.

Son

* The suspence, in which the mind of the reader is left here, conveys the idea of Fillan's danger more forcibly home, than any description that could be introduced. There is a sort of eloquence, in silence with propriety. A minute detail of the circumstances of an important scene is generally cold and insipid. The human mind, free and fond of thinking for itself, is disgusted to find every thing done by the poet. It is, therefore, his business

only

Son of Alpin, bring the harp. Give Fillan's praiſe to the wind. Raiſe high his praiſe, in mine ear, while yet he ſhines in war.

"Leave, blue-eyed Clatho, leave thy hall! Behold that early beam of thine! The hoſt is withered in its courſe. No further look, it is dark. Light-trembling from the harp, ſtrike, virgins, ſtrike the ſound. No hunter he deſcends, from the dewy haunt of the bounding roe. He bends not his bow on the wind; nor ſends his grey arrow abroad.

"Deep-folded in red war! See battle roll againſt his ſide. Striding amid the ridgy ſtrife, he pours the death of thouſands forth. Fillan is like a ſpirit of heaven, that deſcends from the ſkirt of winds The troubled ocean feels his ſteps, as he ſtrides from wave to wave. His path kindles behind him. Iſlands ſhake their heads on the heaving ſeas! Leave, blue-eyed Clatho, leave thy hall!"

only to mark the moſt ſtriking outlines, and to allow the imaginations of his readers to finiſh the figure for themſelves.

The book ends in the afternoon of the third day, from the opening of the poem.

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK VI.

ARGUMENT to Book VI.

This book opens with a speech of Fingal, who sees Cathmor descending to the assistance of his flying army. The king dispatches Ossian to the relief of Fillan. He himself retires behind the rock of Cormul, to avoid the sight of the engagement between his son and Cathmor. Ossian advances. The descent of Cathmor described. He rallies the army, renews the battle, and, before Ossian could arrive, engages Fillan himself. Upon the approach of Ossian, the combat between the two heroes ceases. Ossian and Cathmor prepare to fight, but, night coming on, prevents them. Ossian returns to the place where Cathmor and Fillan fought. He finds Fillan mortally wounded, and leaning against a rock. Their discourse. Fillan dies: his body is laid, by Ossian, in a neighbouring cave. The Caledonian army return to Fingal. He questions them about his son, and, understanding that he was killed, retires, in silence, to the rock of Cormul. Upon the retreat of the army of Fingal, the Fir-bolg advance. Cathmor finds Bran, one of the dogs of Fingal, lying on the shield of Fillan, before the entrance of the cave, where the body of that hero lay. His reflections thereupon. He returns, in a melancholy mood, to his army. Malthos endeavours to comfort him, by the example of his father Borbar-duthul. Cathmor retires to rest. The song of Sul-malla concludes the book, which ends about the middle of the third night, from the opening of the poem.

TEMORA

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK VI.

"CATHMOR * rises on his hill! Shall Fingal take the sword of Luno? But what should become of thy fame, son of white-bosomed Clatho? Turn not thine eyes from Fingal, fair daughter of Inistore I shall not quench thy early beam. It shines along my soul. Rise, wood-skirted Mora, rise between the war and me! Why should Fingal behold the strife, lest his dark-haired warrior should fall! Amidst the song, O Carril, pour the sound of the trembling harp! Here are the voices of rocks! and there the bright tumbling of waters. Father of Oscar, lift the spear! Defend the young in arms. Conceal thy steps from Fillan. He must not know that I doubt his steel. No cloud of mine shall rise, my son, upon thy soul of fire!"

He sunk behind his rock, amid the sound of Carril's song. Brightening, in my growing

* Fingal speaks.

ſoul, I took the ſpear of Temora *. I ſaw, along Moi-lena, the wild tumbling of battle; the ſtrife of death, in gleaming rows, disjoined and broken round. Fillan is a beam of fire. From wing to wing is his waſteful courſe. The ridges of war melt before him. They are rolled, in ſmoak, from the fields!

Now is the coming forth of Cathmor, in the armour of kings! Dark-waves the eagle's wing, above his helmet of fire. Unconcerned are his ſteps, as if they were to the chaſe of Erin. He raiſes, at times, his terrible voice. Erin, abaſhed, gathers round. Their ſouls return back, like a ſtream. They wonder at the ſteps of their fear. He roſe, like the beam of the morning, on a haunted heath: the traveller looks back, with bending eye, on the field of dreadful forms! Sudden, from the rock of Moi-lena, are Sul-malla's trembling ſteps. An oak takes the ſpear from her hand. Half-bent ſhe looſes the lance. But then are her eyes on the king, from amid her wandering locks! No friendly ſtrife is before thee! No light contending of bows, as when the youth of † Inis-huna come forth beneath the eye of Conmor!

As

* The *ſpear of Temora* was that which Oſcar had received, in a preſent, from Cormac, the ſon of Artho, king of Ireland. It was of it that Cairbar made the pretext for quarrelling with Oſcar, at the feaſt, in the firſt book.

† Cluba, *winding bay*; an arm of the ſea in Inis-huna, or the weſtern coaſt of South-Britain. It was in this bay that Cathmor was wind-bound when Sul-malla came, in the

As the rock of Runo, which takes the paſſing clouds as they fly, ſeems growing, in gathered darkneſs, over the ſtreamy heath; ſo ſeems the chief of Atha taller, as gather his people around. As different blaſts fly over the ſea, each behind its dark-blue wave; ſo Cathmor's words, on every ſide, pour his warriors forth. Nor ſilent on his hill is Fillan. He mixes his words with his echoing ſhield. An eagle he ſeemed, with ſounding wings, calling the wind to his rock, when he ſees the coming forth of the roes, on Lutha's * ruſhy field!

Now they bend forward in battle. Death's hundred voices ariſe. The kings, on either ſide, were like fires on the ſouls of the hoſts. Oſſian bounded along. High rocks and trees ruſh tall between the war and me. But I hear the noiſe of ſteel, between my clanging arms. Riſing, gleaming, on the hill, I behold the backward ſteps of hoſts: their backward ſteps, on either ſide, and wildly-looking eyes. The chiefs were met in dreadful fight! The two blue-ſhielded kings! Tall and dark, through gleams of ſteel, are ſeen the ſtriving heroes! I ruſh. My fears for Fillan fly, burning acroſs my ſoul.

the diſguiſe of a young warrior, to accompany him in his voyage to Ireland. Connor, the father of Sul-malla, as is inſinuated at the cloſe of the fourth book, was dead before the departure of his daughter.

* Lutha was the name of a valley in Morven. There dwelt Toſcar the ſon of Conloch, the father of Malvina, who, upon that account, is often called the *maid of Lutha*. Lutha ſignifies *ſwift ſtream*.

I come. Nor Cathmor flies; nor yet comes on; he ſidelong ſtalks along. An icy rock, cold, tall, he ſeems. I call forth all my ſteel. Silent awhile we ſtride, on either ſide of a ruſhing ſtream: then, ſudden turning, all at once, we raiſe our pointed ſpears! We raiſe our ſpears, but night comes down. It is dark and ſilent round; but where the diſtant ſteps of hoſts are ſounding over the heath!

I come to the place where Fillan fought. Nor voice nor ſound is there. A broken helmet lies on earth, a buckler cleſt in twain. Where, Fillan, where art thou, young chief of echoing Morven? He hears me leaning on a rock, which bends its grey head over the ſtream. He hears; but ſullen, dark he ſtands. At length I ſaw the hero!

"Why ſtandeſt thou, robed in darkneſs, ſon of woody Selma? Bright is thy path, my brother, in this dark-brown field! Long has been thy ſtrife in battle! Now the horn of Fingal is heard. Aſcend to the cloud of thy father, to his hill of feaſts. In the evening miſt he ſits, and hears the ſound of Carril's harp. Carry joy to the aged, young breakers of the ſhields!"

"Can the vanquiſhed carry joy? Oſſian, no ſhield is mine! It lies broken on the field. The eagle-wing of my helmet is torn. It is when foes fly before them, that fathers delight in their ſons. But their ſighs burſt forth, in ſecret, when their young warriors yield. No: Fillan ſhall not behold the king! Why ſhould the hero mourn?"

"Son

"Son of blue-eyed Clatho! O Fillan, awake not my ſoul! Wert thou not a burning fire before him? Shall he not rejoice? Such fame belongs not to Oſſian; yet is the king ſtill a ſun to me. He looks on my ſteps with joy. Shadows never riſe on his face. Aſcend, O Fillan, to Mora! His feaſt is ſpread in the folds of miſt."

"Oſſian! give me that broken ſhield: theſe feathers that are rolled in the wind. Place them near to Fillan, that leſs of his fame may fall. Oſſian, I begin to fail. Lay me in that hollow rock. Raiſe no ſtone above, leſt one ſhould aſk about my fame. I am fallen in the firſt of my fields, fallen without renown. Let thy voice ALONE ſend joy to my flying ſoul. Why ſhould the bard know where dwells the loſt beam of Clatho *!

"Is

* A dialogue between Clatho, the mother, and Boſmina, the ſiſter, of Fillan.

CLATHO.

"Daughter of Fingal, ariſe! thou light between thy locks. Lift thy fair head from reſt, ſoft-gliding ſun-beam of Selma! I beheld thy arms on thy breaſt, white toſſed amidſt thy wandering locks: when the ruſtling breeze of the morning came from the deſert of ſtreams. Haſt thou ſeen thy fathers, Bos-mina, deſcending in thy dreams? Ariſe, daughter of Clatho; dwells there aught of grief in thy ſoul?

BOS-MINA.

"A thin form paſſed before me, fading as it flew: like the darkening wave of a breeze, along a field of graſs. Deſcend, from thy wall, O harp, and call back the ſoul of Bos-mina;

* Is thy spirit on the eddying wings, O Fillan, young breaker of shields! Joy pursue my hero, through his folded clouds. The forms of thy fathers, O Fillan, bend to receive their son. I behold the spreading of their fire on Mora: the blue-rolling of their misty wreaths. Joy meet thee, my brother! But we are dark and sad! I behold the foe round

Bos-mina; it has rolled away, like a stream. I hear thy pleasant sound. I hear thee, O harp, and my voice shall rise.

"How often shall ye rush to war, ye dwellers of my soul? Your paths are distant, kings of men, in Erin of blue streams. Lift thy wing, thou southern breeze, from Clono's darkening heath: spread the sails of Fingal towards the bays of his land.

"But who is that, in his strength, darkening in the presence of war? His arm stretches to the foe, like the beam of the sickly sun: when his side is crusted with darkness; and he rolls his dismal course through the sky. Who is it, but the father of Bos-mina? Shall he return till danger is past!

"Fillan, thou art a beam by his side; beautiful, but terrible, is thy light. Thy sword is before thee, a blue fire of night. When shalt thou return to thy roes; to the streams of thy rushy fields? When shall I behold thee from Mora, while winds strew my long locks on their blasts! But shall a young eagle return from the field where the heroes fall!

CLATHO.

"Soft, as the song of Loda, is the voice of Selma's maid. Pleasant to the ear of Clatho is the name of the breaker of shields. Behold, the king comes from ocean: the shield of Morven is borne by bards. The foe has fled before him, like the departure of mist. I hear not the sounding wings of my eagle; the rushing forth of the son of Clatho. Thou art dark, O Fingal; shall the warrior never return?" * * * *

the

the aged. I behold the waſting away of his fame. Thou art left alone in the field, O grey-haired king of Selma!"

I laid him in the hollow rock, at the roar of the nightly ſtream. One red ſtar looked in on the hero. Winds lift, at times, his locks. I liſten. No ſound is heard. The warrior ſlept! As lightning on a cloud, a thought came ruſhing along my ſoul. My eyes roll in fire: my ſtride was in the clang of ſteel. "I will find thee, king of Erin! in the gathering of thy thouſands find thee. Why ſhould that cloud eſcape that quenched our early beam? Kindle your meteors on your hills, my fathers. Light my daring ſteps. I will conſume in wrath*. But ſhould not I

* Here the ſentence is deſignedly left unfiniſhed. The ſenſe is, that he was reſolved, like a deſtroying fire, to conſume Cathmor, who had killed his brother. In the midſt of this reſolution, the ſituation of Fingal ſuggeſts itſelf to him, in a very ſtrong light. He reſolves to return to aſſiſt the king in proſecuting the war. But then his ſhame for not defending his brother recurs to him. He is determined again to go and find out Cathmor. We may conſider him as in the act of advancing towards the enemy, when the horn of Fingal ſounded on Mora, and called back his people to his preſence. This ſoliloquy is natural: the reſolutions which ſo ſuddenly follow one another, are expreſſive of a mind extremely agitated with ſorrow and conſcious ſhame; yet the behaviour of Oſſian, in his execution of the commands of Fingal, is ſo irreprehenſible, that it is not eaſy to determine where he failed in his duty. The truth is, that when men fail in deſigns which they ardently wiſh to accompliſh, they naturally blame themſelves, as the chief cauſe of their diſappointment.

return! The king is without a ſon, grey-haired among his foes! His arm is not as in the days of old. His fame grows dim in Erin. Let me not behold him, laid low in his latter field. But can I return to the king? Will he not aſk about his ſon? "Thou oughteſt to defend young Fillan." Oſſian will meet the foe. Green Erin, thy ſounding tread is pleaſant to my ear. I ruſh on thy ridgy hoſt, to ſhun the eyes of Fingal. I hear the voice of the king, on Mora's miſty top! He calls his two ſons! I come, my father, in my grief. I come like an eagle, which the flame of night met in the deſert, and ſpoiled of half his wings!"

Diſtant *, round the king, on Mora, the broken ridges of Morven are rolled. They turned their eyes: each darkly bends, on his own aſhen ſpear. Silent ſtood the king in the midſt. Thought on thought rolled over his ſoul. As waves on a ſecret mountain-lake, each with its back of foam. He looked; no

* "This ſcene," ſays an ingenious writer, and a good judge, "is ſolemn. The poet always places his chief character amidſt objects which favour the ſublime. The face of the country, the night, the broken remains of a defeated army, and, above all, the attitude and ſilence of Fingal himſelf, are circumſtances calculated to impreſs an awful idea on the mind. Oſſian is moſt ſucceſsful in his night-deſcriptions. Dark images ſuited the melancholy temper of his mind. His poems were all compoſed after the active part of his life was over, when he was blind, and had ſurvived all the companions of his youth: we therefore find a veil of melancholy thrown over the whole."

son appeared, with his long-beaming spear. The sighs rose, crowding, from his soul; but he concealed his grief. At length I stood beneath an oak. No voice of mine was heard. What could I say to Fingal in his hour of woe? His words rose, at length, in the midst: the people shrunk backward as he spoke *.

"Where

* I owe the first paragraph of the following note to the same pen.

"The abashed behaviour of the army of Fingal proceeds rather from shame than fear. The king was not of a tyrannical disposition: *He*, as he professeth himself in the fifth book, *never was a dreadful form, in their presence, darkened into wrath. His voice was no thunder to their ears: his eyes sent forth no death.* The first ages of society are not the times of arbitrary power. As the wants of mankind are few, they retain their independence. It is an advanced state of civilization that moulds the mind to that submission to government, of which ambitious magistrates take advantage, and raise themselves into absolute power."

It is a vulgar error, that the common Highlanders lived, in abject slavery, under their chiefs. Their high ideas of, and attachment to, the heads of their families, probably, led the unintelligent into this mistake. When the honour of the tribe was concerned, the commands of the chief were obeyed without restriction: but, if individuals were oppressed, they threw themselves into the arms of a neighbouring clan, assumed a new name, and were encouraged and protected. The fear of this desertion, no doubt, made the chiefs cautious in their government. As their consequence, in the eyes of others, was in proportion to the number of their people, they took care to avoid every thing that tended to diminish it.

It was but very lately that the authority of the laws extended to the Highlands. Before that time the clans were governed, in civil affairs, not by the verbal commands of the chief, but by what they called *Clechda*, or the traditional precedents of their ancestors. When differences happened between individuals, some of the oldest

"Where is the son of Selma, he who led in war? I behold not his steps, among my people, returning from the field. Fell the young bounding roe, who was so stately on my hills? He fell; for ye are silent. The shield of war is cleft in twain. Let his armour be near to Fingal; and the sword of dark-brown Luno. I am waked on my hills; with morning I descend to war."

High * on Cormul's rock, an oak is flaming to the wind. The grey skirts of mist are rolled around;

men in the tribe were chosen umpires between the parties, to decide according to the *Cleचhda*. The chief interposed his authority, and, invariably, enforced the decision. In their wars, which were frequent, on account of family-feuds, the chief was less reserved in the execution of his authority; and even then he seldom extended it to the taking the life of any of his tribe. No crime was capital, except murder; and that was very unfrequent in the Highlands. No corporal punishment of any kind was inflicted. The memory of an affront of this sort would remain, for ages, in a family, and they would seize every opportunity to be revenged, unless it came immediately from the hands of the chief himself; in that case it was taken, rather as a fatherly correction, than a legal punishment for offences.

* This rock of Cormul is often mentioned in the preceding part of the poem. It was on it Fingal and Ossian stood to view the battle. The custom of retiring from the army, on the night prior to their engaging in battle, was universal among the kings of the Caledonians. Trenmor, the most renowned of the ancestors of Fingal, is mentioned as the first who instituted this custom. Succeeding bards attributed it to a hero of a later period. In an old poem, which begins with *Mac-Arcath na ceud frôl*, this custom of retiring from the army before an engagement, is numbered among the wise institutions of Fergus, the son of Arc or Arcath, the first king of Scots. I shall here

around; thither ſtrode the king in his wrath. Diſtant from the hoſt he always lay, when battle burnt within his ſoul. On two ſpears hung his ſhield on high; the gleaming ſign of death; that ſhield, which he was wont to ſtrike, by night, before he ruſhed to war. It was then his warriors knew, when the king was to lead in ſtrife; for never was this buckler heard, till the wrath of Fingal aroſe. Unequal were his ſteps on high, as he ſhone in the beam of the oak; he was dreadful as the form of the ſpirit of night, when he clothes, on hills, his wild geſtures with miſt, and, iſſuing forth, on the troubled ocean, mounts the car of winds.

Nor ſettled, from the ſtorm, is Erin's ſea of war! they glitter, beneath the moon, and, low-humming, ſtill roll on the field. Alone are the ſteps of Cathmor, before them on the heath; he hangs forward, with all his arms, on Morven's flying hoſt. Now had he come to the moſſy cave, where Fillan lay in night. One tree was bent above the ſtream, which glittered over the rock. There ſhone to the moon the broken ſhield of Clatho's ſon; and near it, on graſs, lay hairy-footed Bran*. He

here tranſlate the paſſage; in ſome other note I may, probably, give all that remains of the poem. *Fergus of the hundred ſtreams, ſon of Arcath who fought of old: thou didſt firſt retire at night: when the foe rolled before thee, in echoing fields. Nor bending in reſt is the king: he gathers battles in his ſoul. Fly, ſon of the ſtranger! with morn he ſhall ruſh abroad.* When, or by whom, this poem was written, is uncertain.

* I remember to have met with an old poem, wherein a ſtory of this ſort is very happily introduced. In one of the

He had missed the chief on Mora, and searched him along the wind. He thought that the blue-eyed hunter slept; he lay upon his shield. No blast came over the heath, unknown to bounding Bran.

Cathmor saw the white-breasted dog; he saw the broken shield. Darkness is blown back on his soul; he remembers the falling away of the people. They come, a stream; are rolled away; another race succeeds. "But some mark the fields, as they pass, with their own mighty names. The heath, through dark-brown years, is theirs; some blue stream winds to their fame. Of these be the chief of Atha, when he lays him down on earth.

the invasions of the Danes, Ullin-clundu, a considerable chief, on the western coast of Scotland, was killed in a rencounter with a flying party of the enemy, who had landed, at no great distance, from the place of his residence. The few followers who attended him were also slain. The young wife of Ullin-clundu, who had not heard of his fall, fearing the worst, on account of his long delay, alarmed the rest of his tribe, who went in search of him along the shore. They did not find him; and the beautiful widow became disconsolate. At length he was discovered, by means of his dog, who sat on a rock beside the body, for some days. The stanza concerning the dog, whose name was Du-chos, or *Blackfoot*, is descriptive.

"Dark-sided Duchos! feet of wind! cold is thy seat on rocks. He (the dog) sees the roe: his ears are high; and half he bounds away. He looks around; but Ullin sleeps; he droops again his head. The winds come past; dark Duchos thinks that Ullin's voice is there. But still he beholds him silent, laid amidst the waving heath. Dark-sided Duchos, his voice no more shall send thee over the heath!"

Often

Often may the voice of future times meet Cathmor in the air: when he strides from wind to wind, or folds himself in the wing of a storm."

Green Erin gathered round the king, to hear the voice of his power. Their joyful faces bend, unequal, forward, in the light of the oak. They who were terrible were removed: Lubar * winds again in their host. Cathmor was that beam from heaven which shone when his people were dark. He was honoured in the midst. Their souls rose with ardour around. The king alone no gladness shewed; no stranger he to war!

"Why is the king so sad?" said Malthos eagle-eyed. "Remains there a foe at Lubar? Lives there among them who can lift the spear? Not so peaceful was thy father, Borbar-duthul †, king of spears. His rage was a fire that

* In order to illustrate this passage, it is proper to lay before the reader the scene of the two preceding battles. Between the hills of Mora and Lona lay the plain of Moi-lena, through which ran the river Lubar. The first battle, wherein Gaul, the son of Morni, commanded on the Caledonian side, was fought on the banks of Lubar. As there was little advantage obtained on either side, the armies, after the battle, retained their former positions.

In the second battle, wherein Fillan commanded, the Irish, after the fall of Foldath, were driven up the hill of Lona; but, upon the coming of Cathmor to their aid, they regained their former situation, and drove back the Caledonians, in their turn: so that *Lubar winded again in their host.*

† Borbar-duthul, the father of Cathmor, was the brother of that Colc-ulla, who is said, in the beginning of the

that always burned: his joy over fallen foes was great. Three days feasted the grey-haired hero, when he heard that Calmar fell: Calmar, who aided the race of Ullin, from Lara of the streams. Often did he feel, with his hands, the steel which, they said, had pierced his foe. He felt it with his hands, for Borbar-duthul's eyes had failed. Yet was the king a sun to his friends; a gale to lift their branches round. Joy was around him in his halls: he loved the sons of Bolga. His name remains in Atha, like the awful memory of ghosts, whose presence was terrible, but they blew the storm away. Now let the voices * of Erin raise the soul of the king; he that shone when war was dark, and laid the mighty low. Fonar, from

the fourth book, to have rebelled against Cormac king of Ireland. Borbar-duthul seems to have retained all the prejudice of his family against the succession of the posterity of Conar, on the Irish throne. From this short episode we learn some facts which tend to throw light on the history of the times. It appears, that, when Swaran invaded Ireland, he was only opposed by the Caël, who possessed Ulster, and the north of that island. Calmar, the son of Matha, whose gallant behaviour and death are related in the third book of Fingal, was the only chief of the race of the Fir-bolg, that joined the Caël, or Irish Caledonians, during the invasion of Swaran. The indecent joy, which Borbar-duthul expressed upon the death of Calmar, is well suited with that spirit of revenge, which subsisted, universally, in every country where the feudal system was established. It would appear that some person had carried to Borbar-duthul that weapon, with which, it was pretended, Calmar had been killed.

* *The voices of Erin*, a poetical expression for the bards of Ireland.

that

that grey-browed rock, pour the tale of other times: pour it on wide-ſkirted Erin, as it ſettles round."

"To me," ſaid Cathmor, "no ſong ſhall riſe; nor Fonar ſit on the rock of Lubar. The mighty there are laid low. Diſturb not their ruſhing ghoſts. Far, Maithos, far remove the ſound of Erin's ſong. I rejoice not over the foe, when he ceaſes to lift the ſpear. With morning we pour our ſtrength abroad. Fingal is wakened on his echoing hill."

Like waves, blown back by ſudden winds, Erin retired, at the voice of the king. Deep-rolled into the field of night, they ſpread their humming tribes. Beneath his own tree, at intervals, each * bard ſat down with his harp. They

* Not only the kings, but every petty chief, had anciently their bards attending them in the field; and thoſe bards, in proportion to the power of the chiefs who retained them, had a number of inferior bards in their train. Upon ſolemn occaſions, all the bards in the army would join in one chorus; either when they celebrated their victories, or lamented the death of a perſon, worthy and renowned, ſlain in the war. The words were of the compoſition of the arch-bard, retained by the king himſelf, who generally attained to that high office on account of his ſuperior genius for poetry. As the perſons of the bards were ſacred, and the emoluments of their office conſiderable, the order, in ſucceeding times, became very numerous and inſolent. It would appear, that, after the introduction of Chriſtianity, ſome ſerved in the double capacity of bards and clergymen. It was from this circumſtance that they had the name of *Chlére*, which is, probably, derived from the Latin Clericus. The *Chlére*, be their name derived from what it will, became at laſt a public nuiſance; for, taking advantage of their ſacred character,

They raiſed the ſong, and touched the ſtring: each to the chief he loved. Before a burning oak Sul-malla touched, at times, the harp. She touched the harp, and heard, between, the breezes in her hair. In darkneſs near, lay the king of Atha, beneath an aged tree. The beam of the oak was turned from him; he ſaw the maid, but was not ſeen. His ſoul poured forth, in ſecret, when he beheld her fearful eye. "But battle is before thee, ſon of Borbar-duthul."

Amidſt the harp, at intervals, ſhe liſtened whether the warrior ſlept. Her ſoul was up; ſhe longed, in ſecret, to pour her own ſad ſong. The field is ſilent. On their wings the blaſts of night retire. The bards had ceaſed; and meteors came, red-winding with their ghoſts. The ſky drew dark: the forms of the dead were blended with the clouds. But heedleſs bends the daughter of Conmor, over the decaying flame. Thou wert alone

racter, they went about, in great bodies, and lived at diſcretion, in the houſes of their chiefs; till another party, of the ſame order, drove them away by mere dint of ſatire. Some of the indelicate diſputes of theſe worthy poetical combatants are handed down, by tradition, and ſhew how much the bards, at laſt, abuſed the privileges, which the admiration of their countrymen had conferred on the order. It was this inſolent behaviour that induced the chiefs to retrench their number, and to take away thoſe privileges which they were no longer worthy to enjoy. Their indolence, and diſpoſition to lampoon, extinguiſhed all the poetical fervour which diſtinguiſhed their predeceſſors, and makes us the leſs regret the extinction of the order.

in her ſoul, car-borne chief of Atha. She raiſed the voice of the ſong, and touched the harp between.

"Clun-galo * came; ſhe miſſed the maid. Where art thou, beam of light? Hunters, from the moſſy rock, ſaw ye the blue-eyed fair? Are her ſteps on graſſy Lumon; near the bed of roes? Ah, me! I behold her bow in the hall. Where art thou, beam of light?"

"Ceaſe †, love of Conmor, ceaſe; I hear thee not on the ridgy heath. My eye is turned to the king, whoſe path is terrible in war. He for whom my ſoul is up in the ſeaſon of my reſt. Deep-boſomed in war he ſtands, he beholds me not from his cloud. Why, ſun of Sul-malla, doſt thou not look forth? I dwell in darkneſs here; wide over me flies the ſhadowy miſt. Filled with dew are my locks; look thou from thy cloud, O ſun of Sul-malla's ſoul!" * * * * * * * *

* Clun-galo, the wife of Conmor, king of Inis-huna, and the mother of Sul-malla. She is here repreſented as miſſing her daughter, after ſhe had fled with Cathmor.

† Sul-malla replies to the ſuppoſed queſtions of her mother. Towards the middle of this paragraph ſhe calls Cathmor *the ſun of her ſoul*, and continues the metaphor throughout. This book ends, we may ſuppoſe, about the middle of the third night, from the opening of the poem.

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK VII.

ARGUMENT to Book VII.

This book begins about the middle of the third night from the opening of the poem. The poet describes a kind of mist, which rose by night from the lake of Lego, and was the usual residence of the souls of the dead, during the interval between their decease and the funeral song. The appearance of the ghost of Fillan above the cave where his body lay. His voice comes to Fingal, on the rock of Cormul. The king strikes the shield of Trenmor, which was an infallible sign of his appearing in arms himself. The extraordinary effect of the sound of the shield. Sul-malla, starting from sleep, awakes Cathmor. Their affecting discourse. She insists with him to sue for peace; he resolves to continue the war. He directs her to retire to the neighbouring valley of Lona, which was the residence of an old Druid, until the battle of the next day should be over. He awakes his army with the sound of his shield. The shield described. Fonar, the bard, at the desire of Cathmor, relates the first settlement of the Fir-bolg in Ireland, under their leader Larthon. Morning comes. Sul-malla retires to the valley of Lona. A lyric song concludes the book.

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK VII.

FROM the wood-ſkirted waters of Lego, aſcend, at times, grey-boſomed miſts; when the gates of the weſt are cloſed, on the ſun's eagle-eye. Wide, over Lara's ſtream, is poured the vapour dark and deep: the moon, like a dim ſhield, is ſwimming through its folds. With this, clothe the ſpirits of old their ſudden geſtures on the wind, when they ſtride, from blaſt to blaſt, along the duſky night. Often, blended with the gale, to ſome warrior's grave *, they roll

* As the miſt, which roſe from the lake of Lego, occaſioned diſeaſes and death, the bards feigned that it was the reſidence of the ghoſts of the deceaſed, during the interval between their death, and the pronouncing the funeral elegy over their tombs; for it was not allowable, without that ceremony was performed, for the ſpirits of the dead to mix with their anceſtors, *in their airy halls*. It was the buſineſs of the ſpirit of the neareſt relation to the deceaſed, to take the miſt of Lego, and pour it over the grave. We find here Conar, the ſon of Trenmor, the firſt king of Ireland, performing this office for Fillan, as it was in the cauſe of the family of Conar that that hero was killed.

roll the miſt, a grey dwelling to his ghoſt, until the ſongs ariſe.

A ſound came from the deſert; it was Conar, king of Inis-fail. He poured his miſt on the grave of Fillan, at blue-winding Lubar. Dark and mournful ſat the ghoſt, in his grey ridge of ſmoak. The blaſt, at times, rolled him together: but the form returned again. It returned with bending eyes, and dark winding of locks of miſt.

It was * dark. The ſleeping hoſt were ſtill in the ſkirts of night. The flame decayed, on the hill of Fingal; the king lay lonely on his ſhield. His eyes were half-cloſed in ſleep: the voice of Fillan came. "Sleeps the huſband of Clatho? Dwells the father of the fallen in reſt? Am I forgot in the folds of darkneſs; lonely in the ſeaſon of night?"

"Why doſt thou mix," ſaid the king, "with the dreams of thy father? Can I forget thee, my ſon, or thy path of fire in the field? Not ſuch come the deeds of the valiant on the ſoul of Fingal. They are not there a beam of lightning, which is ſeen, and is then

* The following is the ſingular ſentiment of a frigid bard:

"More pleaſing to me is the night of Cona, dark-ſtreaming from Oſſian's harp; more pleaſant it is to me, than a white-boſomed dweller between my arms; than a fair-handed daughter of heroes, in the hour of reſt."

Though tradition is not very ſatisfactory concerning the hiſtory of this poet, it has taken care to inform us, that he was *very old* when he wrote the diſtich, a circumſtance which we might have ſuppoſed, without the aid of tradition.

no more. I remember thee, O Fillan! and my wrath begins to riſe."

The king took his deathful ſpear, and ſtruck the deeply-ſounding ſhield: his ſhield that hung high in night, the diſmal ſign of war! Ghoſts fled on every ſide, and rolled their gathered forms on the wind. Thrice from the winding vale aroſe the voice of deaths. The harps * of the bards, untouched, ſound mournful over the hill.

He ſtruck again the ſhield; battles roſe in the dreams of his hoſt. The wide-tumbling ſtrife is gleaming over their ſouls. Blue-ſhielded kings deſcend to war. Backward-looking armies fly; and mighty deeds are half-hid in the bright gleams of ſteel.

But when the third ſound aroſe, deer ſtarted from the clefts of their rocks. The ſcreams of fowl are heard, in the deſert, as each flew, frighted on his blaſt. The ſons of Selma half-roſe, and half-aſſumed their ſpears. But

* It was the opinion of ancient times, that, on the night preceding the death of a perſon worthy and renowned, the harps of thoſe bards, who were retained by his family, emitted melancholy ſounds. This was attributed to *the light touch of ghoſts*; who were ſuppoſed to have a foreknowledge of events. The ſame opinion prevailed long in the north, and the particular ſound was called *the warning voice of the dead*. *The voice of death*, mentioned in the preceding ſentence, was of a different kind. Each perſon was ſuppoſed to have an attendant ſpirit, who aſſumed his form and voice, on the night preceding his death, and appeared, to ſome, in the attitude in which the perſon was to die. The VOICES OF DEATH were the foreboding ſhrieks of thoſe ſpirits.

ſilence rolled back on the hoſt: they knew the ſhield of the king. Sleep returned to their eyes; the field was dark and ſtill.

No ſleep was thine in darkneſs, blue-eyed daughter of Conmor! Sul-malla heard the dreadful ſhield, and roſe, amid the night. Her ſteps are towards the king of Atha. "Can danger ſhake his daring ſoul!" In doubt, ſhe ſtands, with bending eyes. Heaven burns with all its ſtars.

Again the ſhield reſounds! She ruſhed. She ſtopt. Her voice half-roſe. It failed. She ſaw him, amidſt his arms, that gleamed to heaven's fire. She ſaw him dark in his locks, that roſe to nightly wind. Away, for fear, ſhe turned her ſteps. "Why ſhould the king of Erin awake? Thou art not a dream to his reſt, daughter of Inis-huna."

More dreadful rings the ſhield. Sul-malla ſtarts. Her helmet falls. Loud echoes Lubar's rock, as over it rolls the ſteel. Burſting from the dreams of night, Cathmor half-roſe, beneath his tree. He ſaw the form of the maid, above him, on the rock. A red ſtar, with twinkling beam, looked through her floating hair.

"Who comes through night to Cathmor, in the ſeaſon of his dreams? Bringeſt thou aught of war? Who art thou, ſon of night! Stand'ſt thou before me, a form of the times of old? A voice from the fold of a cloud, to warn me of the danger of Erin?"

"Nor

"Nor lonely ſcout am I, nor voice from folded cloud," ſhe ſaid; "but I warn thee of the danger of Erin. Doſt thou hear that ſound? It is not the feeble king of Atha, that rolls his ſigns on night."

"Let the warrior roll his ſigns," he replied; "to Cathmor they are the ſounds of harps. My joy is great, voice of night, and burns over all my thoughts. This is the muſic of kings, on lonely hills, by night; when they light their daring ſouls, the ſons of mighty deeds! The feeble dwell alone, in the valley of the breeze; where miſts lift their morning ſkirts, from the blue winding ſtreams."

"Not feeble, king of men, were they, the fathers of my race. They dwelt in the folds of battle, in their diſtant lands. Yet delights not my ſoul, in the ſigns of death! He*, who never yields, comes forth: O ſend the bard of peace!"

Like a dropping rock, in the deſert, ſtood Cathmor in his tears. Her voice came, a breeze, on his ſoul, and waked the memory of her land; where ſhe dwelt by her peaceful ſtreams, before he came to the war of Conmor.

* Fingal is ſaid to have never been overcome in battle. From this proceeded that title of honour which is always beſtowed on him in tradition, *Fiön gul na buai'*, FINGAL OF VICTORIES. In a poem, juſt now in my hands, which celebrates ſome of the great actions of Arthur, the famous Britiſh hero, that appellation is often beſtowed on him. The poem, from the phraſeology, appears to be ancient; and is, perhaps, though that is not mentioned, a tranſlation from the Welſh language.

"Daughter of ſtrangers," he ſaid, (ſhe trembling turned away,) "long have I marked thee in my ſteel, young pine of Inis-huna. But my ſoul, I ſaid, is folded in a ſtorm. Why ſhould that beam ariſe, till my ſteps return in peace? Have I been pale in thy preſence, as thou bidſt me to fear the king? The time of danger, O maid, is the ſeaſon of my ſoul; for then it ſwells a mighty ſtream, and rolls me on the foe."

"Beneath the moſs-covered rock of Lona, near his own loud ſtream; grey in his locks of age, dwells Clonmal * king of harps. Above him is his echoing tree, and the dun bounding of roes. The noiſe of our ſtrife reaches his ear, as he bends in the thoughts of years. There let thy reſt be, Sul-malla, until our battle ceaſe. Until I return, in my arms, from the ſkirts of the evening miſt, that riſes, on Lona, round the dwelling of my love."

A light fell on the ſoul of the maid; it roſe kindled before the king. She turned her face to Cathmor, from amidſt her waving locks. "Sooner ſhall the eagle of heaven be torn from the ſtream of his roaring wind, when he ſees the dun prey before him, the

* Claon-mal, *crooked eye-brow*. From the retired life of this perſon is inſinuated, that he was of the order of the Druids; which ſuppoſition is not, at all, invalidated by the appellation of *king of harps*, here beſtowed on him; for all agree that the bards were of the number of the Druids originally.

young ſons of the bounding roe, than thou, O Cathmor, be turned from the ſtrife of renown. Soon may I ſee thee, warrior, from the ſkirts of the evening miſt, when it is rolled around me, on Lona of the ſtreams. While yet thou art diſtant far, ſtrike, Cathmor, ſtrike the ſhield, that joy may return to my darkened ſoul, as I lean on the moſſy rock. But if thou ſhouldſt fall, I am in the land of ſtrangers; O ſend thy voice, from thy cloud, to the maid of Inis-huna!"

"Young branch of green-headed Lumon, why doſt thou ſhake in the ſtorm? Often has Cathmor returned, from darkly-rolling wars. The darts of death are but hail to me; they have often rattled along my ſhield. I have riſen brightened from battle, like a meteor from a ſtormy cloud. Return not, fair beam, from thy vale, when the roar of battle grows. Then might the foe eſcape, as from my fathers of old.

"They told to Son-mor *, of Clunar †, who was ſlain by Cormac in fight. Three days darkened Son-mor, over his brother's fall. His ſpouſe beheld the ſilent king, and foreſaw his ſteps to war. She prepared the bow, in ſecret, to attend her blue-ſhielded hero. To her dwelt darkneſs, at Atha, when

* Són-mor, *tall handſome man.* He was the father of Borbar-duthul, chief of Atha, and grandfather to Cathmor himſelf.

† Cluan-er, *man of the field.* This chief was killed in battle by Cormac Mac-Conar, king of Ireland, the father of Ros-crána, the firſt wife of Fingal. The ſtory is alluded to in ſome ancient poems.

he was not there. From their hundred ſtreams, by night, poured down the ſons of Alnecma. They had heard the ſhield of the king, and their rage aroſe. In clanging arms, they moved along, towards Ullin of the groves. Son-mor ſtruck his ſhield, at times, the leader of the war.

"Far behind followed Sul-allin *, over the ſtreamy hills. She was a light on the mountain, when they croſſed the vale below. Her ſteps were ſtately on the vale, when they roſe on the moſſy hill. She feared to approach the king, who left her in echoing Atha. But when the roar of battle roſe; when hoſt was rolled on hoſt; when Son-mor burnt, like the fire of heaven in clouds, with her ſpreading hair came Sul-allin; for ſhe trembled for her king. He ſtopt the ruſhing ſtrife to ſave the love of heroes. The foe fled by night; Clunar ſlept without his blood; the blood which ought to be poured upon the warrior's tomb.

"Nor roſe the rage of Son-mor, but his days were ſilent and dark. Sul-allin wandered, by her grey ſtreams, with her tearful eyes. Often did ſhe look, on the hero, when he was folded in his thoughts. But ſhe ſhrunk from his eyes, and turned her lone ſteps away. Battles roſe, like a tempeſt, and drove the miſt from his ſoul. He beheld, with joy, her ſteps in the hall, and the white riſing of her hands on the harp.

* Suil-alluin, *beautiful*; the wife of Son-mor.

In

In * his arms ſtrode the chief of Atha, to where his ſhield hung, high, in night: high on a moſſy bough, over Lubar's ſtreamy roar. Seven boſſes roſe on the ſhield; the ſeven voices of the king, which his warriors received, from the wind, and marked over all their tribes.

On each boſs is placed a ſtar of night; Can-mathon with beams unſhorn; Col-derna riſing from a cloud: Ul-oicho robed in miſt; and the ſoft beam of Cathlin glittering on a rock. Smiling, on its own blue wave, Rel-durath half-ſinks its weſtern light. The red eye of Berthin looks, through a grove, on the hunter, as he returns, by night, with the ſpoils of the bounding roe. Wide, in the midſt, aroſe the cloudleſs beam of Ton-théna, that ſtar, which looked, by night, on the courſe of the ſea-toſſed Larthon: Larthon, the firſt of Bolga's race, who travelled on the winds †. White-boſomed ſpread the ſails of the king, towards ſtreamy Inis-fail; dun night was rolled before him, with its ſkirts of miſt. Unconſtant

* To avoid multiplying notes, I ſhall give here the ſignification of the names of the ſtars, engraved on the ſhield. Cean-mathon, *head of the bear.* Colderna, *ſlant and ſharp beam.* Ul-oicho, *ruler of night.* Cathlin, *beam of the wave.* Reul-durath, *ſtar of the twilight.* Berthin, *fire of the hill.* Ton-thena, *meteor of the waves.* Theſe etymologies, excepting that of Cean-mathon, are pretty exact. Of it I am not ſo certain; for it is not very probable, that the Fir-bolg had diſtinguiſhed a conſtellation, ſo very early as the days of Larthon, by the name of the bear.

† *To travel on the winds*, a poetical expreſſion for ſailing.

blew the winds, and rolled him from wave to wave. Then rose the fiery-haired Ton-théna, and smiled from her parted cloud. Larthon * blessed the well-known beam, as it faint-gleamed on the deep.

Beneath the spear of Cathmor, rose that voice which awakes the bards. They came, dark-winding, from every side; each with the sound of his harp. Before them rejoiced the king, as the traveller, in the day of the sun;

* Larthon is compounded of *Lear*, sea, and *thon*, wave. This name was given to the chief of the first colony of the Fir-bolg, who settled in Ireland, on account of his knowledge in navigation. A part of an old poem is still extant, concerning this hero. It abounds with those romantic fables of giants and magicians, which distinguished the compositions of the less ancient bards. The descriptions, contained in it, are ingenious, and proportionable to the magnitude of the persons introduced; but, being unnatural, they are insipid and tedious. Had the bard kept within the bounds of probability, his genius was far from being contemptible. The exordium of his poem is not destitute of merit; but it is the only part of it that I think worthy of being presented to the reader.

"Who first sent the black ship, through ocean, like a whale through the bursting of foam? Look, from thy darkness, on Cronath, Ossian of the harps of old! Send thy light on the blue-rolling waters, that I may behold the king. I see him dark in his own shell of oak! sea-tossed Larthon, thy soul is strong. It is careless as the wind of thy sails; as the wave that rolls by thy side. But the silent green isle is before thee, with its sons, who are tall as woody Lumon; Lumon which sends from its top, a thousand streams, white-wandering down its sides."

It may, perhaps, be for the credit of this bard, to translate no more of this poem, for the continuation of his description of the Irish giants betrays his want of judgment.

when he hears, far-rolling around, the murmur of moſſy ſtreams; ſtreams that burſt, in the deſert, from the rock of roes.

"Why," ſaid Fonar, "hear we the voice of the king, in the ſeaſon of his reſt? Were the dim forms of thy fathers bending in thy dreams? Perhaps they ſtand on that cloud, and wait for Fonar's ſong; often they come to the fields where their ſons are to lift the ſpear. Or ſhall our voice ariſe for him who lifts the ſpear no more; he that conſumed the field, from Moma of the groves?

"Not forgot is that cloud in war, bard of other times. High ſhall his tomb riſe, on Moi-lena, the dwelling of renown. But, now, roll back my ſoul to the times of my fathers: to the years when firſt they roſe, on Inis-huna's waves. Nor alone pleaſant to Cathmor is the remembrance of wood-covered Lumon. Lumon of the ſtreams, the dwelling of white-boſomed maids.

"Lumon * of the ſtreams, thou riſeſt on Fonar's ſoul! Thy ſun is on thy ſide, on the rocks of thy bending trees. The dun roe is ſeen from thy furze; the deer lifts his branchy head; for he ſees, at times, the hound on the half-covered heath. Slow, on the vale, are

* Lumon was a hill, in Inis-huna, near the reſidence of Sul-malla. This epiſode has an immediate connection with what is ſaid of Larthon, in the deſcription of Cathmor's ſhield.

the ſteps of maids; the white-armed daughters of the bow: they lift their blue eyes to the hill, from amidſt their wandering locks. Not there is the ſtride of Larthon, chief of Inis-huna. He mounts the wave on his own dark oak, in Cluba's ridgy bay. That oak which he cut from Lumon, to bound along the ſea. The maids turn their eyes away, leſt the king ſhould be lowly-laid; for never had they ſeen a ſhip, dark rider of the wave!

"Now he dares to call the winds, and to mix with the miſt of ocean. Blue Inis-fail roſe, in ſmoak; but dark-ſhirted night came down. The ſons of Bolga feared. The fiery-haired Ton-théna roſe. Culbin's bay received the ſhip, in the boſom of its echoing woods. There iſſued a ſtream from Duthuma's horrid cave; where ſpirits gleamed, at times, with their half-finiſhed forms.

"Dreams deſcended on Larthon: he ſaw ſeven ſpirits of his fathers. He heard their half-formed words, and dimly beheld the times to come. He beheld the kings of Atha, the ſons of future days. They led their hoſts, along the field, like ridges of miſt, which winds pour, in autumn, over Atha of the groves.

"Larthon raiſed the hall of Samla*, to the muſic of the harp. He went forth to the roes of Lena, to their wonted ſtreams. Nor did he forget green-headed Lumon; he often

* Samla, *apparitions*, ſo called from the viſion of Larthon, concerning his poſterity.

bounded

bounded over his ſeas, to where white-handed Flathal * looked from the hill of roes. Lumon of the foamy ſtreams, thou riſeſt on Fonar's ſoul!"

Morning pours from the eaſt. The miſty heads of the mountains riſe. Valleys ſhew, on every ſide, the grey winding of their ſtreams. His hoſt heard the ſhield of Cathmor: at once they roſe around; like a crouded ſea, when firſt it feels the wings of the wind. The waves know not whither to roll; they lift their troubled heads.

Sad and ſlow retired Sul-malla to Lona of the ſtreams. She went, and often turned; her blue eyes rolled in tears. But when ſhe came to the rock, that darkly-covered Lona's vale, ſhe looked, from her burſting ſoul, on the king; and ſunk, at once, behind.

Son of Alpin, ſtrike the ſtring. Is there aught of joy in the harp? Pour it then on the ſoul of Oſſian: it is folded in miſt. I hear thee, O bard! in my night. But ceaſe the lightly trembling ſound. The joy of grief belongs to Oſſian, amidſt his dark-brown years.

Green thorn of the hill of ghoſts, that ſhakeſt thy head to nightly winds! I hear no ſound in thee; is there no ſpirit's windy ſkirt now ruſtling in thy leaves? Often are the ſteps of the dead, in the dark-eddying blaſts; when the moon, a dun ſhield, from the eaſt, is rolled along the ſky.

* Flathal, *heavenly, exquiſitely beautiful.* She was the wife of Larthon.

"Ullin,

" Ullin, Carril, and Ryno, voices of the days of old! Let me hear you, while yet it is dark, to pleaſe and awake my ſoul. I hear you not, ye ſons of ſong; in what hall of the clouds is your reſt? Do you touch the ſhadowy harp, robed with morning miſt, where the ruſtling ſun comes forth from his green-headed waves?

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK VIII.

ARGUMENT to BOOK VIII.

The fourth morning, from the opening of the poem, comes on. Fingal still continuing in the place, to which he had retired on the preceding night, is feen at intervals, through the mift, which covered the rock of Cormul. The defcent of the king is defcribed. He orders Gaul, Dermid, and Carril the bard, to go to the valley of Cluna, and conduct, from thence, to the Caledonian army, Ferad-artho, the fon of Cairbre, the only perfon remaining of the family of Conar, the firft king of Ireland. The king takes the command of the army, and prepares for battle. Marching towards the enemy, he comes to the cave of Lubar, where the body of Fillan lay. Upon feeing his dog Bran, who lay at the entrance of the cave, his grief returns. Cathmor arranges the Irifh army in order of battle. The appearance of that hero. The general conflict is defcribed. The actions of Fingal and Cathmor. A ftorm. The total rout of the Fir-bolg. The two kings engage, in a column of mift, on the banks of Lubar. Their attitude and conference after the combat. The death of Cathmor. Fingal refigns *the fpear of Trenmor* to Offian. The ceremonies obferved on that occafion. The fpirit of Cathmor, in the mean time, appears to Sul-malla, in the valley of Lona. Her forrow. Evening comes on. A feaft is prepared. The coming of Ferad-artho is announced by the fongs of an hundred bards. The poem clofes with a fpeech of Fingal.

TEMORA:

AN

EPIC POEM.

BOOK VIII.

As when the wintry winds have ſeized the waves of the mountain-lake, have ſeized them in ſtormy night, and clothed them over with ice; white, to the hunter's early eye, the billows ſeem to roll. He turns his ear to the ſound of each unequal ridge. But each is ſilent, gleaming, ſtrewn with boughs and tufts of graſs, which ſhake and whiſtle to the wind, over their grey ſeats of froſt. So ſilent ſhone to the morning the ridges of Morven's hoſt, as each warrior looked up from his helmet towards the hill of the king; the cloud-covered hill of Fingal, where he ſtrode, in the folds of miſt. At times is the hero ſeen, greatly dim in all his arms. From thought to thought rolled the war, along his mighty ſoul.

Now is the coming forth of the king. Firſt appeared the ſword of Luno; the ſpear half-

iſſuing from a cloud, the ſhield ſtill dim in miſt. But when the ſtride of the king came abroad, with all his grey, dewy locks in the wind; then roſe the ſhouts of his hoſt over every moving tribe. They gathered, gleaming round, with all their echoing ſhields. So riſe the green ſeas round a ſpirit, that comes down from the ſqually wind. The traveller hears the ſound afar, and lifts his head over the rock. He looks on the troubled bay, and thinks he dimly ſees the form. The waves ſport, unwieldy, round, with all their backs of foam.

Far-diſtant ſtood the ſon of Morni, Duthno's race, and Cona's bard. We ſtood far-diſtant; each beneath his tree. We ſhunned the eyes of the king: we had not conquered in the field. A little ſtream rolled at my feet: I touched its light wave, with my ſpear. I touched it with my ſpear; nor there was the ſoul of Oſſian. It darkly roſe, from thought to thought, and ſent abroad the ſigh.

"Son of Morni," ſaid the king, "Dermid, hunter of roes! why are ye dark, like two rocks, each with its trickling waters? No wrath gathers on Fingal's ſoul, againſt the chiefs of men. Ye are my ſtrength in battle; the kindling of my joy in peace. My early voice has been a pleaſant gale to your ears, when Fillan prepared the bow. The ſon of Fingal is not here, nor yet the chaſe of the bounding roes. But why ſhould the breakers of ſhields ſtand, darkened, far away?"

Tall

Tall they ſtrode towards the king; they ſaw him turned to Mora's wind. His tears came down for his blue-eyed ſon, who ſlept in the cave of ſtreams. But he brightened before them, and ſpoke to the broad-ſhielded kings.

"Crommal, with woody rocks, and miſty top, the field of winds, pours forth, to the ſight, blue Lubar's ſtreamy roar. Behind it rolls clear-winding Lavath, in the ſtill vale of deer. A cave is dark in a rock; above it ſtrong-winged eagles dwell; broad-headed oaks before it, ſound in Cluna's wind. Within, in his locks of youth, is Ferad-artho *, blue-eyed

* Ferad-artho was the ſon of Cairbar Mac-Cormac king of Ireland. He was the only one remaining of the race of Conar, the ſon of Trenmor, the firſt Iriſh monarch, according to Oſſian. In order to make this paſſage thoroughly underſtood, it may not be improper to recapitulate ſome part of what has been ſaid in preceding notes. Upon the death of Conar the ſon of Trenmor, his ſon Cormac ſucceeded on the Iriſh throne, Cormac reigned long. His children were, Cairbar, who ſucceeded him, and Roscrana, the firſt wife of Fingal. Cairbar, long before the death of his father Cormac, had taken to wife Bos-gala, the daughter of Colgar, one of the moſt powerful chiefs in Connaught, and had, by her, Artho, afterwards king of Ireland. Soon after Artho arrived at man's eſtate, his mother Bos gala died, and Cairbar married Beltanno, the daughter of Conachar of Ullin, who brought him a ſon, whom he called Ferad-artho, i. e. *a man in the place of Artho.* The occaſion of the name was this: Artho, when his brother was born, was abſent, on an expedition, in the ſouth of Ireland. A falſe report was brought to his father, that he was killed. *Cairbar*, to uſe the words of a poem on the ſubject, *darkened for his fair-haired ſon. He turned to the young beam of light, the ſon of Baltunno of Co-*

eyed king, the ſon of broad-ſhielded Cairbar, from Ullin of the roes. He liſtens to the voice of Condan, as, grey, he bends in feeble light. He liſtens, for his foes dwell in the echoing halls of Temora. He comes, at times, abroad, in the ſkirts of miſt, to pierce the bounding roes. When the ſun looks on the field, nor by the rock, nor ſtream, is he! He ſhuns the race of Bolga, who dwell in his father's hall. Tell him, that Fingal lifts the ſpear, and that his foes, perhaps, may fail."

nachar. Thou ſhalt be Ferad-artho, he ſaid, a fire before thy race. Cairbar, ſoon after, died, nor did Artho long ſurvive him. Artho was ſucceeded, in the Iriſh throne, by his ſon Cormac, who, in his minority, was murdered by Cairbar, the ſon of Borbar-duthul. Ferad-artho, ſays tradition, was very young, when the expedition of Fingal, to ſettle him on the throne of Ireland, happened. During the ſhort reign of young Cormac, Ferad-artho lived at the royal reſidence of Temora. Upon the murder of the king, Condan, the bard, conveyed Ferad-artho, privately, to the cave of Cluna, behind the mountain Crommal in Ulſter, where they both lived concealed, during the uſurpation of the family of Atha. A late bard has delivered the whole hiſtory, in a poem juſt now in my poſſeſſion. It has little merit, if we except the ſcene between Ferad-artho, and the meſſengers of Fingal, upon their arrival, in the valley of Cluna. After hearing of the great actions of Fingal, the young prince propoſes the following queſtions concerning him, to Gaul and Dermid: "Is the king tall as the rock of my cave? Is his ſpear a fir of Cluna? Is he a rough-winged blaſt, on the mountain, which takes the green oak by the head, and tears it from its hill? Glitters Lubar within his ſtride, when he ſends his ſtately ſteps along? Nor is he tall, ſaid Gaul, as that rock: nor glitter ſtreams within his ſtrides; but his ſoul is a mighty flood, like the ſtrength of Ullin's ſeas."

"Lift up, O Gaul, the ſhield before him. Stretch, Dermid, Temora's ſpear. Be thy voice in his ear, O Carril, with the deeds of his fathers. Lead him to green Moi-lena, to the duſky field of ghoſts; for there, I fall forward, in battle, in the folds of war. Before dun night deſcends, come to high Dunmora's top. Look, from the grey ſkirts of miſt, on Lena of the ſtreams. If there my ſtandard ſhall float on wind, over Lubar's gleaming ſtream, then has not Fingal failed in the laſt of his fields."

Such were his words; nor aught replied the ſilent, ſtriding kings. They looked ſide-long, on Erin's hoſt, and darkened, as they went. Never before had they left the king, in the midſt of the ſtormy field. Behind him, touching at times his harp, the grey-haired Carril moved. He foreſaw the fall of the people, and mournful was the ſound! It was like a breeze that comes, by fits, over Lego's reedy lake; when ſleep half-deſcends on the hunter, within his moſſy cave.

"Why bends the bard of Cona," ſaid Fingal, "over the ſecret ſtream? Is this a time for ſorrow, father of low-laid Oſcar? Be the warriors * remembered in peace; when echoing

* Malvina is ſuppoſed to ſpeak the following ſoliloquy:

"Malvina is like the bow of the ſhower, in the ſecret valley of ſtreams; it is bright, but the drops of heaven are rolling on its blended light. They ſay, that I am fair within my locks, but, on my brightneſs, is the wandering of

ing ſhields are heard no more. Bend, then, in grief, over the flood, where blows the mountain breeze. Let them paſs on thy ſoul, the blue-eyed dwellers of the tomb. But Erin rolls to war; wide-tumbling, rough, and dark. Lift, Oſſian, lift the ſhield. I am alone, my ſon!"

As comes the ſudden voice of winds to the becalmed ſhip of Inis-huna, and drives it large, along the deep, dark rider of the wave; ſo the voice of Fingal ſent Oſſian, tall, along the heath. He lifted high his ſhining ſhield, in the duſky wing of war: like the broad, blank moon, in the ſkirt of a cloud, before the ſtorms ariſe.

Loud, from moſs-covered Mora, poured down, at once, the broad-winged war. Fingal

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of tears. Darkneſs flies over my ſoul, as the duſky wave of the breeze, along the graſs of Lutha. Yet have not the roes failed me, when I moved between the hills. Pleaſant, beneath my white hand, aroſe the ſound of harps. What then, daughter of Lutha, travels over thy ſoul, like the dreary path of a ghoſt, along the nightly beam? Should the young warrior fall, in the roar of his troubled fields? Young virgins of Lutha ariſe, call back the wandering thoughts of Malvina. Awake the voice of the harp, along my echoing vale. Then ſhall my ſoul come forth, like a light from the gates of the morn, when clouds are rolled around them, with their broken ſides.

"Dweller of my thoughts, by night, whoſe form aſcends in troubled fields, why doſt thou ſtir up my ſoul, thou far-diſtant ſon of the king? Is that the ſhip of my love, its dark courſe through the ridges of ocean? How art thou ſo ſudden, Oſcar, from the heath of ſhields?"

The reſt of this poem conſiſts of a dialogue between Ullin and Malvina, wherein the diſtreſs of the latter is carried to the higheſt pitch.

gal led his people forth, king of Morven of ſtreams. On high ſpreads the eagle's wing. His grey hair is poured on his ſhoulders broad. In thunder are his mighty ſtrides. He often ſtood, and ſaw behind, the wide-gleaming rolling of armour. A rock he ſeemed, grey over with ice, whoſe woods are high in wind. Bright ſtreams leap from its head, and ſpread their foam on blaſts.

Now he came to Lubar's cave, where Fillan darkly ſlept. Bran ſtill lay on the broken ſhield: the eagle-wing is ſtrewed by the winds. Bright, from withered furze, looked forth the hero's ſpear. Then grief ſtirred the ſoul of the king, like whirlwinds blackening on a lake. He turned his ſudden ſtep, and leaned on his bending ſpear.

White-breaſted Bran came bounding with joy to the known path of Fingal. He came, and looked towards the cave, where the blue-eyed hunter lay, for he was wont to ſtride, with morning to the dewy bed of the roe. It was then the tears of the king came down, and all his ſoul was dark. But as the riſing wind rolls away the ſtorm of rain, and leaves the white ſtreams to the ſun, and high hills with their heads of graſs: ſo the returning war brightened the mind of Fingal. He bounded*, on

* The Iriſh compoſitions concerning Fingal invariably ſpeak of him as a giant. Of theſe Hibernian poems there are now many in my hands. From the language and alluſions to the times in which they were writ, I ſhould

on his ſpear, over Lubar, and ſtruck his echoing ſhield. His ridgy hoſt bend forward, at once, with all their pointed ſteel.

Nor Erin heard, with fear, the ſound: wide they came rolling along. Dark Malthos, in the wing of war, looks forward from ſhaggy brows. Next roſe that beam of light Hidalla! then the ſide-long looking gloom of Moronnan. Blue-ſhielded Clonar lifts the ſpear;

fix the date of their compoſition in the fifteenth and ſixteenth centuries. In ſome paſſages, the poetry is far from wanting merit, but the fable is unnatural, and the whole conduct of the pieces injudicious. I ſhall give one inſtance of the extravagant fictions of the Iriſh bards, in a poem which they, moſt unjuſtly, aſcribe to Oſſian. The ſtory of it is this: Ireland being threatened with an invaſion from ſome part of Scandinavia, Fingal ſent Oſſian, Oſcar, and Ca-olt, to watch the bay, in which, it was expected, the enemy was to land. Oſcar, unluckily, fell aſleep, before the Scandinavians appeared; and, great as he was, ſays the Iriſh bard, he had one bad property, that no leſs could awaken him, before his time, than cutting off one of his fingers, or throwing a great ſtone againſt his head; and it was dangerous to come near him on thoſe occaſions, till he had recovered himſelf, and was fully awake. Ca-olt, who was employed by Oſſian to waken his ſon, made choice of throwing the ſtone againſt his head, as the leaſt dangerous expedient. The ſtone rebounding from the hero's head, ſhook, as it rolled along, the hill for three miles round. Oſcar roſe in rage, fought bravely, and, ſingly, vanquiſhed a wing of the enemy's army. Thus the bard goes on, till Fingal put an end to the war, by the total rout of the Scandinavians. Puerile, and even deſpicable, as theſe fictions are, yet Keating and O'Flaherty have no better authority than the poems which contain them, for all that they write concerning Fion Maccommal, and the pretended militia of Ireland.

Cormar ſhakes his buſhy locks on the wind. Slowly, from behind a rock, roſe the bright form of Atha. Firſt appeared his two pointed ſpears, then the half of his burniſhed ſhield: like the riſing of a nightly meteor, over the vale of ghoſts. But when he ſhone all abroad; the hoſts plunged, at once, into ſtrife. The gleaming waves of ſteel are poured on either ſide.

As meet two troubled ſeas, with the rolling of all their waves, when they feel the wings of contending winds, in the rock-ſided frith of Lumon; along the echoing hills is the dim courſe of ghoſts: from the blaſt fall the torn groves on the deep, amidſt the foamy path of whales. So mixed the hoſts! Now Fingal! now Cathmor came abroad. The dark tumbling of death is before them: the gleam of broken ſteel is rolled on their ſteps, as, loud, the high-bounding kings hewed down the ridge of ſhields.

Maronnan fell, by Fingal, laid large acroſs a ſtream. The waters gathered by his ſide, and leapt grey over his boſſy ſhield. Clonar is pierced by Cathmor: nor yet lay the chief on earth. An oak ſeized his hair in his fall. His helmet rolled on the ground. By its thong, hung his broad ſhield; over it wandered his ſtreaming blood. Tla-min * ſhall weep,

* Tla-min, *mildly ſoft*. The loves of Clonar and Tlamin were rendered famous in the north, by a fragment of a lyric poem. It is a dialogue between Clonar and Tlamin.

weep, in the hall, and ſtrike her heaving breaſt.

Nor did Oſſian forget the ſpear, in the wing of his war. He ſtrewed the field with dead.

Tlamin. She begins with a ſoliloquy which he overhears.

TLAMIN.

"Clonar, ſon of Conglas of I-mor, young hunter of dun-ſided roes! where art thou laid, amidſt ruſhes, beneath the paſſing wing of the breeze? I behold thee, my love, in the plain of thy own dark ſtreams! The clung thorn is rolled by the wind, and ruſtles along his ſhield. Bright in his locks he lies: the thoughts of his dreams fly, darkening over his face. Thou thinkeſt of the battles of Oſſian, young ſon of the echoing iſle!

"Half hid in the grove, I ſit down. Fly back, ye miſts of the hill. Why ſhould ye hide her love from the blue eyes of Tlamin of harps?

CLONAR.

"As the ſpirit, ſeen in a dream, flies off from our opening eyes, we think, we behold his bright path between the cloſing hills; ſo fled the daughter of Clungal, from the ſight of Clonar of ſhields. Ariſe from the gathering of trees; blue-eyed Tlamin, ariſe.

TLAMIN.

"I turn me away from his ſteps. Why ſhould he know of my love! My white breaſt is heaving over ſighs, as foam on the dark courſe of ſtreams. But he paſſes away, in his arms! Son of Conglas, my ſoul is ſad.

CLONAR.

"It was the ſhield of Fingal! the voice of kings from Selma of harps! My path is towards green Erin. Ariſe, fair light, from thy ſhades. Come to the field of my ſoul, there is the ſpreading of hoſts. Ariſe, on Clonar's troubled ſoul, young daughter of the blue-ſhielded Clungal."

Clungal was the chief of I-mor, one of the Hebrides.

Young Hidalla came. "Soft voice of ſtreamy Clonra! why doſt thou liſt the ſteel? O that we met in the ſtrife of ſong, in thy own ruſhy vale!" Malthos beheld him low, and darkened as he ruſhed along. On either ſide of a ſtream, we bend in the echoing ſtrife. Heaven comes rolling down: around burſt the voices of ſqually winds. Hills are clothed, at times, in fire. Thunder rolls in wreaths of miſt. In darkneſs ſhrunk the foe: Morven's warriors ſtood aghaſt. Still I bent over the ſtream, amidſt my whiſtling locks.

Then roſe the voice of Fingal, and the ſound of the flying foe. I ſaw the king, at times, in lightning, darkly-ſtriding in his might. I ſtruck my echoing ſhield, and hung forward on the ſteps of Alnecma: the foe is rolled before me, like a wreath of ſmoak.

The ſun looked forth from his cloud. The hundred ſtreams of Moi-lena ſhone. Slow roſe the blue columns of miſt, againſt the glittering hill. "Where are the mighty kings*? Nor by that ſtream, nor wood are they!

* Fingal and Cathmor. The conduct here is perhaps proper. The numerous deſcriptions of ſingle combats have already exhauſted the ſubject. Nothing new, nor adequate to our high idea of the kings, can be ſaid. *A column of miſt* is thrown over the whole, and the combat is left to the imagination of the reader. Poets have almoſt univerſally failed in their deſcriptions of this ſort. Not all the ſtrength of Homer could ſuſtain, with dignity, the *minutiæ* of a ſingle combat. The throwing of a ſpear, and the braying of a ſhield, as ſome of our own poets moſt elegantly expreſs it, convey no magnificent, though

they

they! I hear the clang of arms! Their ſtrife is in the boſom of that miſt. Such is the contending of ſpirits in a nightly cloud, when they ſtrive for the wintry wings of winds, and the rolling of the foam-covered waves.

I ruſhed along. The grey miſt roſe. Tall, gleaming, they ſtood at Lubar. Cathmor leaned againſt a rock. His half-fallen ſhield received the ſtream, that leapt from the moſs above. Towards him is the ſtride of Fingal: he ſaw the hero's blood. His ſword fell ſlowly to his ſide. He ſpoke, midſt his darkening joy.

"Yields the race of Borbar-duthul? Or ſtill does he lift the ſpear? Not unheard is thy name, at Atha, in the green dwelling of ſtrangers. It has come, like the breeze of his deſert, to the ear of Fingal. Come to my hill of feaſts: the mighty fail, at times. No fire am I to low-laid foes: I rejoice not over the fall of the brave. To cloſe * the wound is

they are ſtriking ideas. Our imagination ſtretches beyond, and, conſequently, deſpiſes, the deſcription. It were, therefore, well for ſome poets, in my opinion, (though it is, perhaps. ſomewhat ſingular,) to have, ſometimes, thrown *miſt* over their ſingle combats.

* Fingal is very much celebrated, in tradition, for his knowledge in the virtues of herbs. The Iriſh poems, concerning him, often repreſent him curing the wounds which his chiefs received in battle. They fable concerning him, that he was in poſſeſſion of a cup, containing the eſſence of herbs, which inſtantaneouſly healed wounds. The knowledge of curing the wounded, was, till of late, univerſal among the Highlanders. We hear of no other diſorder, which required the ſkill of phyſic. The wholeſomeneſs of the climate, and an active life, ſpent in hunting, excluded diſeaſes.

mine;

mine: I have known the herbs of the hills. I ſeized their fair heads, on high, as they waved by their ſecret ſtreams. Thou art dark and ſilent, king of Atha of ſtrangers!"

"By Atha of the ſtream," he ſaid, "there riſes a moſſy rock. On its head is the wandering of boughs, within the courſe of winds. Dark, in its face, is a cave, with its own loud rill. There have I heard the tread of ſtrangers*, when they paſſed to my hall of ſhells. Joy roſe, like a flame, on my ſoul; I bleſt the echoing rock. Here be my dwelling, in darkneſs; in my graſſy vale. From this I ſhall mount the breeze, that purſues my thiſtle's beard; or look down, on blue-winding Atha, from its wandering miſt."

"Why ſpeaks the king of the tomb? Oſſian! the warrior has failed! Joy meet thy ſoul, like a ſtream, Cathmor, friend of ſtrangers! My ſon, I hear the call of years; they take my ſpear as they paſs along. Why does not Fingal,

* Cathmor reflects, with pleaſure, even in his laſt moments, on the relief he had afforded to ſtrangers. The very tread of their feet was pleaſant in his ear. His hoſpitality was not paſſed unnoticed by the bards; for, with them, it became a proverb, when they deſcribed the hoſpitable diſpoſition of a hero, *that he was like Cathmor of Atha, the friend of ſtrangers*. It will ſeem ſtrange, that, in all the Iriſh poems, there is no mention made of Cathmor. This muſt be attributed to the revolutions and domeſtic confuſions which happened in that iſland, and utterly cut off all the real traditions concerning ſo ancient a period. All that we have related of the ſtate of Ireland before the fifth century is of late invention, and the work of ill-informed ſenachies and injudicious bards.

gal, they ſeem to ſay, reſt within his hall? Doſt thou always delight in blood? In the tears of the ſad? No: ye dark-rolling years, Fingal delights not in blood. Tears are wintry ſtreams that waſte away my ſoul. But, when I lie down to reſt, then comes the mighty voice of war. It awakes me, in my hall, and calls forth all my ſteel. It ſhall call it forth no more; Oſſian, take thou thy father's ſpear. Lift it, in battle, when the proud ariſe.

" My fathers, Oſſian, trace my ſteps; my deeds are pleaſant to their eyes. Wherever I come forth to battle, on my field, are their columns of miſt. But mine arm reſcued the feeble! the haughty found my rage was fire. Never over the fallen did mine eye rejoice. For this *, my fathers ſhall meet me, at the gates of their airy halls, tall with robes of light, with mildly-kindled eyes. But, to the proud in arms, they are darkened moons in heaven, which ſend the fire of night red-wandering over their face.

* The Celtic nations had ſome idea of rewards, and perhaps of puniſhments, after death. Thoſe who behaved, in life, with bravery and virtue, were received, with joy, to the airy halls of their fathers; but *the dark in ſoul*, to uſe the expreſſion of the poet, were ſpurned away *from the habitation of heroes, to wander on all the winds*. Another opinion, which prevailed in thoſe times, tended not a little to make individuals emulous to excel one another in martial atchievements. It was thought, that, in the *hall of clouds*, every one had a ſeat, raiſed above others, in proportion as he excelled them, in valour, when he lived.

"Father of heroes, Trenmor, dweller of eddying winds! I give thy ſpear to Oſſian, let thine eye rejoice. Thee have I ſeen, at times, bright from between thy clouds; ſo appear to my ſon, when he is to lift the ſpear: then ſhall he remember thy mighty deeds, though thou art now but a blaſt."

He gave the ſpear to my hand, and raiſed, at once, a ſtone on high, to ſpeak to future times, with its grey head of moſs. Beneath he placed a ſword * in earth, and one bright boſs from his ſhield. Dark in thought, a while, he bends: his words, at length, came forth.

"When thou, O ſtone, ſhalt moulder down, and loſe thee, in the moſs of years, then ſhall the traveller come, and whiſtling paſs away. Thou know'ſt not, feeble man, that fame once ſhone on Moi-lena. Here Fingal reſigned his ſpear, after the laſt of his fields. Paſs away, thou empty ſhade! in thy voice there is no renown. Thou dwelleſt by ſome peaceful ſtream; yet a few years, and thou art gone. No one remembers thee, thou dweller of thick miſt! But Fingal ſhall be clothed with fame, a beam of light to other times; for he went forth, in echoing ſteel, to ſave the weak in arms."

* There are ſome ſtones ſtill to be ſeen in the north, which were erected as memorials of ſome remarkable tranſactions between the ancient chiefs. There are generally found, beneath them, ſome piece of arms, and a bit of half-burnt wood. The cauſe of placing the laſt there is not mentioned in tradition.

Bright-

Brightening in his fame, the king ſtrode to Lubar's ſounding oak, where it bent, from its rock, over the bright-tumbling ſtream. Beneath it is a narrow plain, and the ſound of the fount of the rock. Here the ſtandard * of Morven poured its wreaths on the wind, to mark the way of Ferad-artho, from his ſecret vale. Bright, from his parted weſt, the ſun of heaven looked abroad. The hero ſaw his people, and heard their ſhouts of joy. In broken ridges round, they glittered to the beam. The king rejoiced, as a hunter in his own green vale, when, after the ſtorm is rolled away, he ſees the gleaming ſides of the rocks. The green thorn ſhakes its head in their face; from their top look forward the roes.

Grey †, at his moſſy cave, is bent the aged form of Clonmal. The eyes of the bard had failed. He leaned forward on his ſtaff. Bright in her locks, before him, Sul-malla liſtened to the tale; the tale of the kings of Atha, in the days of old. The noiſe of battle had ceaſed

* The erecting of his ſtandard on the bank of Lubar, was the ſignal which Fingal, in the beginning of the book, promiſed to give to the chiefs, who went to conduct Ferad-artho to the army, ſhould he himſelf prevail in battle. This ſtandard here is called the *ſun-beam*. The reaſon of this appellation, I gave in my notes on the poem entitled Fingal.

† The ſcene is changed to the valley of Lona, whither Sul-malla had been ſent, by Cathmor, before the battle. Clonmal, an aged bard, or rather druid, as he ſeems here to be endued with a preſcience of events, had long dwelt there in a cave. This ſcene is calculated to throw a melancholy gloom over the mind.

in his ear: he ftopt, and raifed the fecret figh. The fpirits of the dead, they faid, often lightened along his foul. He faw the king of Atha low, beneath his bending tree.

"Why art thou dark?" faid the maid. "The ftrife of arms is paft. Soon * fhall he come to thy cave, over thy winding ftreams. The fun looks from the rocks of the weft. The mifts of the lake arife. Grey, they fpread on that hill, the rufhy dwelling of roes. From the mift fhall my king appear! Behold, he comes in his arms. Come to the cave of Clonmal, O my beft beloved!"

It was the fpirit of Cathmor, ftalking, large, a gleaming form. He funk by the hollow ftream, that roared between the hills. "It was but the hunter," fhe faid, "who fearches for the bed of the roe. His fteps are not forth to war; his fpoufe expects him with night. He fhall, whiftling, return with the fpoils of the dark-brown hinds." Her eyes were turned to the hill; again the ftately form came down. She rofe in the midft of joy. He retired again in mift. Gradual vanifh his limbs of fmoak, and mix with the mountain-wind. Then fhe knew that he fell! "King of Erin, art thou low!" Let Offian forget her grief; it waftes the foul of age †.

Evening

* Cathmor had promifed, in the feventh book, to come to the cave of Clonmal, after the battle was over.

† Tradition relates, that Offian, the next day after the decifive battle between Fingal and Cathmor, went to find out

Evening came down on Moi-lena. Grey rolled the ſtreams of the land. Loud came forth the voice of Fingal: the beam of oaks aroſe. The people gathered round with gladneſs, with gladneſs blended with ſhades. They ſidelong looked to the king, and beheld his unfiniſhed joy. Pleaſant, from the way of the deſert, the voice of muſic came. It ſeemed, at firſt, the noiſe of a ſtream, far diſtant on its rocks. Slow it rolled along the hill, like the ruffled wing of a breeze, when it takes the tufted beard of the rocks, in the ſtill ſeaſon of

out Sul-malla, in the valley of Lona. His addreſs to her follows:

"Awake, thou daughter of Conmor, from the fern-ſkirted cavern of Lona. Awake, thou ſun-beam in deſerts; warriors one day muſt fail. They move forth, like terrible lights; but, often, their cloud is near. Go to the valley of ſtreams, to the wandering of herds on Lumon; there dwells in his lazy miſt, the man of many days. But he is unknown, Sul-malla, like the thiſtle of the rock of roes; it ſhakes its grey beard, in the wind, and falls, unſeen of our eyes. Not ſuch are the kings of men; their departure is a meteor of fire, which pours its red courſe from the deſert, over the boſom of night.

"He is mixed with the warriors of old, thoſe fires that have hid their heads. At times ſhall they come forth in ſong. Not forgot has the warrior failed. He has not ſeen, Sul-malla, the fall of a beam of his own: no fair-haired ſon, in his blood, young troubler of the field. I am lonely, young branch of Lumon; I may hear the voice of the feeble, when my ſtrength ſhall have failed in years, for young Oſcar has ceaſed, on his field."—* * * *

Sul-malla returned to her own country. She makes a conſiderable figure in another poem; her behaviour in that piece accounts for that partial regard with which the poet ought to ſpeak of her throughout Temora.

 night.

night. It was the voice of Condan, mixed with Carril's trembling harp. They came, with blue-eyed Ferad-artho, to Mora of the ſtreams.

Sudden burſts the ſong from our bards, on Lena: the hoſt ſtruck their ſhields midſt the ſound. Gladneſs roſe brightening on the king, like the beam of a cloudy day, when it riſes, on the green hill, before the roar of winds. He ſtruck the boſſy ſhield of kings; at once they ceaſe around. The people lean forward, from their ſpears, towards the voice of their land *.

" Sons of Morven, ſpread the feaſt; ſend the night away in ſong. Ye have ſhone around me, and the dark ſtorm is paſt. My people

* Before I finiſh my notes, it may not be altogether improper to obviate an objection, which may be made to the credibility of the ſtory of Temora. It may be aſked, whether it is probable, that Fingal could perform ſuch actions as are aſcribed to him in this book, at an age when his grandſon, Oſcar, had acquired ſo much reputation in arms. To this it may be anſwered, that Fingal was but very young [book 4th] when he took to wife Ros-crana, who ſoon after became the mother of Oſſian. Oſſian was alſo extremely young when he married Ever-allin, the mother of Oſcar. Tradition relates, that Fingal was but eighteen years old at the birth of his ſon Oſſian; and that Oſſian was much about the ſame age, when Oſcar, his ſon, was born. Oſcar, perhaps, might be about twenty, when he was killed, in the battle of Gabhra [book 1ſt]; ſo the age of Fingal, when the deciſive battle was fought between him and Cathmor, was juſt fifty-ſix years. In thoſe times of activity and health, the natural ſtrength and vigour of a man was little abated at ſuch an age; ſo that there is nothing improbable in the actions of Fingal, as related in this book.

are the windy rocks, from which I ſpread my eagle-wings, when I ruſh forth to renown, and ſeize it on its field. Oſſian, thou haſt the ſpear of Fingal: it is not the ſtaff of a boy with which he ſtrews the thiſtle round, young wanderer of the field. No: it is the lance of the mighty, with which they ſtretched forth their hands to death. Look to thy fathers, my ſon; they are awful beams. With morning lead Ferad-artho forth to the echoing halls of Temora. Remind him of the kings of Erin; the ſtately forms of old. Let not the fallen be forgot, they were mighty in the field. Let Carril pour his ſong, that the kings may rejoice in their miſt. To-morrow I ſpread my ſails to Selma's ſhaded walls; where ſtreamy Duthula winds through the ſeats of roes."

CONLATH and CUTHÓNA:

A

P O E M

ARGUMENT.

Conlath was the youngest of Morni's sons, and brother to the celebrated Gaul. He was in love with Cuthóna the daughter of Rumar, when Toscar the son of Kinfena, accompanied by Fercuth his friend, arrived, from Ireland, at Mora, where Conlath dwelt. He was hospitably received, and, according to the custom of the times, feasted three days with Conlath. On the fourth he set sail, and coasting the *island of waves*, one of the Hebrides, he saw Cuthóna hunting, fell in love with her, and carried her away, by force, in his ship. He was forced, by stress of weather, into I-thona, a desert isle. In the mean time Conlath, hearing of the rape, sailed after him, and found him on the point of sailing for the coast of Ireland. They fought; and they and their followers fell by mutual wounds. Cuthóna did not long survive: for she died of grief the third day after. Fingal, hearing of their unfortunate death, sent Stormal the son of Moran to bury them, but forgot to send a bard to sing the funeral song over their tombs. The ghost of Conlath comes, long after, to Ossian, to intreat him to transmit to posterity, his and Cuthóna's fame. For it was the opinion of the times, that the souls of the deceased were not happy, till their elegies were composed by a bard.

CONLATH and CUTHÓNA

P O E M.

DID not Oſſian hear a voice? or is it the ſound of days that are no more? Often does the memory of former times come, like the evening ſun, on my ſoul. The noiſe of the chaſe is renewed. In thought, I lift the ſpear. But Oſſian did hear a voice! Who art thou, ſon of night? The children of the feeble are aſleep. The midnight wind is in my hall. Perhaps it is the ſhield of Fingal that echoes to the blaſt. It hangs in Oſſian's hall. He feels it ſometimes with his hands. Yes! I hear thee, my friend! Long has thy voice been abſent from mine ear! What brings thee, on thy cloud, to Oſſian, ſon of generous Morni? Are the friends of the aged near thee? Where is Oſcar, ſon of fame? He was often near thee, O Conlath, when the ſound of battle aroſe.

Ghoſt of CONLATH.

Sleeps the ſweet voice of Cona, in the midſt of his ruſtling hall? Sleeps Oſſian in his hall, and

and his friends without their fame? The ſea rolls round dark I-thona *. Our tombs are not ſeen in our iſle. How long ſhall our fame be unheard, ſon of reſounding Selma?

OSSIAN.

O that mine eyes could behold thee! Thou ſitteſt, dim on thy cloud! Art thou like the miſt of Lano? An half-extinguiſhed meteor of fire? Of what are the ſkirts of thy robe? Of what is thine airy bow? He is gone on his blaſt like the ſhade of a wandering cloud. Come from thy wall, O harp! Let me hear thy ſound. Let the light of memory ariſe on I-thona. Let me behold again my friends! And Oſſian does behold his friends on the dark-blue iſle. The cave of Thona appears, with its moſſy rocks and bending trees. A ſtream roars at its mouth. Toſcar bends over its courſe. Fercuth is ſad by his ſide. Cuthóna † ſits at a diſtance and weeps. Does the wind of the waves deceive me? Or do I hear them ſpeak.

TOSCAR.

The night was ſtormy. From their hills the groaning oaks came down. The ſea darkly-tumbled beneath the blaſt. The roaring waves climbed againſt our rocks. The

* I-thona, *iſland of waves*, one of the uninhabited weſtern iſles.

† Cuthóna the daughter of Rumar, whom Toſcar had carried away by force.

lightning

lightning came often and ſhewed the blaſted fern. Fercuth! I ſaw the ghoſt who embroiled the night*. Silent he ſtood, on that bank. His robe of miſt flew on the wind. I could behold his tears. An aged man he ſeemed, and full of thought!

FERCUTH.

It was thy father, O Toſcar. He foreſees ſome death among his race. Such was his appearance on Crómla, before the great Ma-ronnan † fell. Erin of hills of graſs! how pleaſant are thy vales? Silence is near thy blue ſtreams. The ſun is on thy fields. Soft is the ſound of the harp in Seláma ‡. Lovely the cry of the hunter on Crómla. But we are in dark I-thona, ſurrounded by the ſtorm. The billows lift their white heads above our rocks. We tremble amidſt the night.

TOSCAR.

Whither is the ſoul of battle fled, Fercuth with locks of age? I have ſeen thee undaunted in danger: thine eyes burning with joy in the fight. Whither is the ſoul of battle fled?

* It was long thought, in the north of Scotland, that ſtorms were raiſed by the ghoſts of the deceaſed. This notion is ſtill entertained by the vulgar; for they think that whirlwinds, and ſudden ſqualls of wind, are occaſioned by ſpirits, who tranſport themſelves, in that manner, from one place to another.

† Ma-ronnan was the brother of Toſcar.

‡ Selámath, *beautiful to behold*, the name of Toſcar's reſidence, on the coaſt of Ulſter, near the mountain Crómla.

Our fathers never feared. Go; view the settling sea: the stormy wind is laid. The billows still tremble on the deep. They seem to fear the blast. Go; view the settling sea. Morning is grey on our rocks. The sun will look soon from his east; in all his pride of light! I lifted up my sails with joy, before the halls of generous Conlath. My course was by a desert isle: where Cuthóna pursued the deer. I saw her, like that beam of the sun that issues from the cloud. Her hair was on her heaving breast. She, bending forward, drew the bow. Her white arm seemed, behind her, like the snow of Crómla. Come to my soul, I said, huntress of the desert isle! But she wastes her time in tears. She thinks of the generous Conlath. Where can I find thy peace, Cuthóna, lovely maid!

CUTHONA*.

A distant steep bends over the sea, with aged trees and mossy rocks. The billow rolls at its feet. On its side is the dwelling of roes. The people call it Mora. There the towers of my love arise. There Conlath looks over the sea for his only love. The daughters of the chase returned. He beheld their downcast eyes. "Where is the daughter of Rumar?" But they answered not. My peace dwells on Mora, son of the distant land!

* Cu-thóna, *the mournful sound of the waves*; a poetical name given her on account of her mourning to the sound of the waves; her name in tradition is Gormhuil, *the blue-eyed maid*.

TOSCAR.

TOSCAR.

Cuthóna ſhall return to her peace: to the towers of generous Conlath. He is the friend of Toſcar! I have feaſted in his halls! Riſe, ye gentle breezes of Erin. Stretch my ſails toward Mora's ſhores. Cuthóna ſhall reſt on Mora; but the days of Toſcar muſt be ſad. I ſhall ſit in my cave in the field of the ſun. The blaſt will ruſtle in my trees. I ſhall think it is Cuthóna's voice. But ſhe is diſtant far, in the halls of the mighty Conlath!

CUTHONA.

Ha! what cloud is that? It carries the ghoſts of my fathers. I ſee the ſkirts of their robes, like grey and watry miſt. When ſhall I fall, O Rumar? Sad Cuthóna foreſees her death. Will not Conlath behold me, before I enter the narrow houſe*?

OSSIAN.

He ſhall behold thee, O maid! He comes along the heaving ſea. The death of Toſcar is dark on his ſpear. A wound is in his ſide! He is pale at the cave of Thona. He ſhews his ghaſtly wound. Where art thou with thy tears, Cuthóna? The chief of Mora dies. The viſion grows dim on my mind. I behold the chiefs no more! But, O ye bards of future

* The grave.

times,

times, remember the fall of Conlath with tears. He fell before his day. Sadneſs darkened in his hall. His mother looked to his ſhield on the wall, and it was bloody *. She knew that her hero fell. Her ſorrow was heard on Mora. Art thou pale on thy rock, Cuthóna, beſide the fallen chiefs? Night comes, and day returns, but none appears to raiſe their tomb. Thou frighteneſt the ſcreaming fowls away. Thy tears for ever flow. Thou art pale as a watry cloud that riſes from a lake!

The ſons of green Selma came. They found Cuthóna cold. They raiſed a tomb over the heroes. She reſts at the ſide of Conlath! Come not to my dreams, O Conlath! Thou haſt received thy fame. Be thy voice far diſtant from my hall; that ſleep may deſcend at night. O that I could forget my friends: till my footſteps ſhould ceaſe to be ſeen! till I come among them with joy! and lay my aged limbs in the narrow houſe!

* It was the opinion of the times, that the arms left by the heroes at home, became bloody the very inſtant their owners were killed, though at ever ſo great a diſtance.

BERRATHON:

A

POEM.

ARGUMENT.

Fingal in his voyage to Lochlin, whither he had been invited by Starno the father of Agandecca, touched at Berrathon, an island of Scandinavia, where he was kindly entertained by Lathmor, the petty king of the place, who was a vassal of the supreme kings of Lochlin. The hospitality of Lathmor gained him Fingal's friendship, which that hero manifested, after the imprisonment of Lathmor by his own son, by sending Ossian and Toscar, the father of Malvina, so often mentioned, to rescue Lathmor, and to punish the unnatural behaviour of Uthal. Uthal was handsome, and, by the ladies, much admired. Nina-thoma, the beautiful daughter of Torthóma, a neighbouring prince, fell in love and fled with him. He proved unconstant! for another lady, whose name is not mentioned, gaining his affections, he confined Nina-thoma to a desert island near the coast of Berrathon. She was relieved by Ossian, who, in company with Toscar, landing on Berrathon, defeated the forces of Uthal, and killed him in a single combat. Nina-thoma, whose love not all the bad behaviour of Uthal could erase, hearing of his death, died of grief. In the mean time Larthmor is restored, and Ossian and Toscar return in triumph to Fingal.

The poem opens with an elegy on the death of Malvina the daughter of Toscar, and closes with presages of Ossian's death.

BERRATHON

A

POEM.

BEND thy blue courſe, O ſtream! round the narrow plain of Lutha *. Let the green woods hang over it, from their hills: the ſun look on it at noon. The thiſtle is there on its rock, and ſhakes its beard to the wind. The flower hangs its heavy head, waving, at times, to the gale. "Why doſt thou awake me, O gale!" it ſeems to ſay, "I am covered with the drops of heaven? The time of my fading is near, the blaſt that ſhall ſcatter my leaves. To-morrow ſhall the traveller come; he that ſaw me in my beauty ſhall come. His eyes will ſearch the field, but they will not find me." So ſhall they ſearch in vain, for the voice of Cona, after it has failed in the field. The hunter ſhall come forth in the morning, and the voice of my harp ſhall not be heard. "Where is the ſon of car-borne Fingal?" The tear will be on his cheek! Then come thou, O Malvina; with all thy muſic come!

* Lutha, *ſwift ſtream*.

Lay Oſſian in the plain of Lutha: let his tomb riſe in the lovely field.

Malvina! where art thou, with thy ſongs, with the ſoft ſound of thy ſteps? Son * of Alpin, art thou near? where is the daughter of Toſcar? "I paſſed, O ſon of Fingal, by Tor-lutha's moſſy walls. The ſmoak of the hall was ceaſed. Silence was among the trees of the hill. The voice of the chaſe was over. I ſaw the daughters of the bow. I aſked about Malvina, but they anſwered not. They turned their faces away: thin darkneſs covered their beauty. They were like ſtars, on a rainy hill, by night, each looking faintly through her miſt."

Pleaſant † be thy reſt, O lovely beam! ſoon haſt thou ſet on our hills! The ſteps of thy departure were ſtately, like the moon on the blue, trembling wave. But thou haſt left us in darkneſs, firſt of the maids of Lutha! We ſit, at the rock, and there is no voice; no light but the meteor of fire! Soon haſt thou ſet, O Malvina, daughter of generous Toſcar! But thou riſeſt like the beam of the eaſt, among the ſpirits of thy friends, where they ſit, in their ſtormy halls, the chambers of the thunder! A cloud hovers over Cona. Its blue curling ſides are high. The winds are beneath

* His father was one of Fingal's principal bards, and he had a poetical genius.

† Oſſian ſpeaks. He calls Malvina a beam of light, and continues the metaphor throughout the paragraph.

it, with their wings. Within it is the dwelling* of Fingal. There the hero ſits in darkneſs. His airy ſpear is in his hand. His ſhield, half-covered with clouds, is like the darkened moon; when one half ſtill remains in the wave, and the other looks ſickly on the field!

His friends ſit around the king, on miſt! They hear the ſongs of Ullin: he ſtrikes the half-viewleſs harp. He raiſes the feeble voice. The leſſer heroes, with a thouſand meteors, light the airy hall. Malvina riſes in the midſt; a bluſh is on her cheek. She beholds the unknown faces of her fathers. She turns aſide her humid eyes. "Art thou come ſo ſoon," ſaid Fingal, "daughter of generous Toſcar? Sadneſs dwells in the halls of Lutha My aged ſon † is ſad! I hear the breeze of Cona, that was wont to lift thy heavy locks. It comes to the hall, but thou art not there. Its voice is mournful among the arms of thy fathers! Go, with thy ruſtling wing, O breeze! ſigh on Malvina's tomb. It riſes yonder beneath the rock, at the blue ſtream of Lutha.

* The deſcription of this ideal palace of Fingal is agreeable to the notions of thoſe times, concerning the ſtate of the deceaſed, who were ſuppoſed to purſue, after death, the pleaſures and employments of their former life. The ſituation of the Celtic heroes, in their ſeparate ſtate, if not entirely happy, is more agreeable than the notions of the ancient Greeks concerning their departed heroes.

† Oſſian; who had a great friendſhip for Malvina, both on account of her love for his ſon Oſcar, and her attention to himſelf.

The

The maids * are departed to their place. Thou alone, O breeze, mournest there!"

But who comes from the dusky west, supported on a cloud? A smile is on his grey, watry face. His locks of mist fly on wind. He bends forward on his airy spear. It is thy father, Malvina! "Why shinest thou, so soon, on our clouds," he says, "O lovely light of Lutha! But thou wert sad, my daughter. Thy friends had passed away. The sons of little men † were in the hall. None remained of the heroes, but Ossian king of spears!"

And dost thou remember Ossian, car-borne Toscar ‡, son of Conloch? The battles of our youth were many. Our swords went together to the field. They saw us coming like two falling rocks. The sons of the stranger fled. "There come the warriors of Cona!" they said. "Their steps are in the paths of the flying!" Draw near, son of Alpin, to the song of the aged. The deeds of other times are in my soul. My memory beams on the days that are past: on the days of mighty

* That is, the young virgins who sung the funeral elegy over her tomb.

† Tradition is entirely silent concerning what passed in the north immediately after the death of Fingal and all his heroes; by which it would seem that the actions of their successors were not to be compared to those of the renowned Fingalians.

‡ Toscar was the son of that Conloch, who was also father to the lady whose unfortunate death is related in the last episode of the second book of Fingal.

Toſcar, when our path was in the deep. Draw near, ſon of Alpin, to the laſt ſound of the voice of Cona!

The king of Morven commanded. I raiſed my ſails to the wind. Toſcar chief of Lutha ſtood at my ſide; I roſe on the dark-blue wave. Our courſe was to ſea-ſurrounded Berrathon *, the iſle of many ſtorms. There dwelt, with his locks of age, the ſtately ſtrength of Larthmor; Larthmor, who ſpread the feaſt of ſhells to Fingal, when he went to Starno's halls, in the days of Agandecca. But when the chief was old, the pride of his ſon aroſe; the pride of fair-haired Uthal, the love of a thouſand maids. He bound the aged Larthmor, and dwelt in his ſounding halls!

Long pined the king in his cave, beſide his rolling ſea. Day did not come to his dwelling; nor the burning oak by night. But the wind of ocean was there, and the parting beam of the moon. The red ſtar looked on the king, when it trembled on the weſtern wave. Snitho came to Selma's hall: Snitho the friend of Larthmor's youth. He told of the king of Berrathon: the wrath of Fingal aroſe. Thrice he aſſumed the ſpear, reſolved to ſtretch his hand to Uthal. But the memory † of his deeds roſe before

* Barrathón, *a promontory in the midſt of waves.*

† The meaning is, that Fingal remembered his own great actions, and conſequently would not ſully them by engaging in a petty war againſt Uthal, who was ſo far his inferior in valour and power.

the king. He ſent his ſon and Toſcar. Our joy was great on the rolling ſea. We often half-unſheathed our ſwords. For never before had we fought alone, in battles of the ſpear.

Night came down on the ocean. The winds departed on their wings. Cold and pale is the moon. The red ſtars lift their heads on high. Our coaſt is ſlow along the coaſt of Berrathon. The white waves tumble on the rocks. "What voice is that," ſaid Toſcar, "which comes between the ſounds of the waves? It is ſoft but mournful, like the voice of departed bards. But I behold a maid*. She ſits on the rock alone. Her head bends on her arm of ſnow. Her dark hair is in the wind. Hear, ſon of Fingal, her ſong, it is ſmooth as the gliding ſtream." We came to the ſilent bay, and heard the maid of night.

"How long will ye roll around me, blue-tumbling waters of ocean? My dwelling was not always in caves, nor beneath the whiſtling tree. The feaſt was ſpread in Torthoma's hall. My father delighted in my voice. The youths beheld me in the ſteps of my lovelineſs. They bleſſed the dark-haired Nina-thoma. It was then thou didſt come, O Uthal! like the ſun of heaven! The ſouls of the virgins are thine, ſon of generous Larthmor! But why doſt thou

* Nina-thoma, the daughter of Torthoma, who had been confined to a deſert iſland by her lover Uthal.

leave

leave me alone, in the midst of roaring waters? Was my soul dark with thy death? Did my white hand lift the sword? Why then hast thou left me alone, king of high Finthormo *."

The tear started from my eye, when I heard the voice of the maid. I stood before her in my arms. I spoke the words of peace! "Lovely dweller of the cave! what sigh is in thy breast? Shall Ossian lift his sword in thy presence, the destruction of thy foes? Daughter of Torthóma, rise. I have heard the words of thy grief. The race of Morven are around thee, who never injured the weak. Come to our dark-bosomed ship! thou brighter than that setting moon! Our course is to the rocky Berrathon, to the echoing walls of Finthormo." She came in her beauty; she came with all her lovely steps. Silent joy brightened in her face; as when the shadows fly from the field of spring; the blue-stream is rolling in brightness, and the green bush bends over its course!

The morning rose with its beams. We came to Rothma's bay. A boar rushed from the wood: my spear pierced his side, and he fell. I rejoiced over the blood †. I fore-

* Finthormo, the palace of Uthal. The names in this episode are not of a Celtic original.

† Ossian might have thought that his killing a boar on his first landing in Berrathon, was a good omen of his future success in that island. The present Highlanders look, with a degree of superstition, upon the success of their first action, after they have engaged in any desperate undertaking.

ſaw my growing fame. But now the ſound of Uthal's train came, from the high Finthormo. They ſpread over the heath to the chaſe of the boar. Himſelf comes ſlowly on, in the pride of his ſtrength. He lifts two pointed ſpears. On his ſide is the hero's ſword. Three youths carry his poliſhed bows. The bounding of five dogs is before him. His heroes move on, at a diſtance, admiring the ſteps of the king. Stately was the ſon of Larthmor! but his ſoul was dark! Dark as the troubled face of the moon, when it foretels the ſtorms.

We roſe on the heath before the king. He ſtopt in the midſt of his courſe. His heroes gathered around. A grey-haired bard advanced. "Whence are the ſons of the ſtrangers!" began the bard of ſong. "The children of the unhappy come to Berrathon; to the ſword of car-borne Uthal. He ſpreads no feaſt in his hall. The blood of ſtrangers is on his ſtreams. If from Selma's walls ye come, from the moſſy walls of Fingal, chuſe three youths to go to your king to tell of the fall of his people. Perhaps the hero may come and pour his blood on Uthal's ſword. So ſhall the fame of Finthormo ariſe, like the growing tree of the vale!"

"Never will it riſe, O bard," I ſaid in the pride of my wrath. "He would ſhrink from the preſence of Fingal, whoſe eyes are the flames of death. The ſon of Comhal comes, and kings vaniſh before him. They are rolled together, like miſt, by the breath of

of his rage. Shall three tell to Fingal, that his people fell? Yes! they may tell it, bard! but his people ſhall fall with fame!"

I ſtood in the darkneſs of my ſtrength. Toſcar drew his ſword at my ſide. The foe came on like a ſtream. The mingled ſound of death aroſe. Man took man; ſhield met ſhield; ſteel mixed its beams with ſteel. Darts hiſs through air. Spears ring on mails. Swords on broken bucklers bound. As the noiſe of an aged grove beneath the roaring wind, when a thouſand ghoſts break the trees by night, ſuch was the din of arms! But Uthal fell beneath my ſword. The ſons of Berrathon fled. It was then I ſaw him in his beauty, and the tear hung in my eye! "Thou art fallen *, young tree," I ſaid, "with all thy beauty round thee. Thou art fallen on thy plains, and the field is bare. The winds come from the deſert! there is no ſound in thy leaves! Lovely art thou in death, ſon of car-borne Larthmor."

Nina-thoma ſat on the ſhore. She heard the ſound of battle. She turned her red eyes on Lethmal, the grey-haired bard of Selma.

* To mourn over the fall of their enemies, was a practice univerſal among the Celtic heroes. This is more agreeable to humanity than the ſhameful inſulting of the dead, ſo common in Homer, and after him, ſervilely copied by all his imitators, (the humane Virgil not excepted,) who have been more ſucceſsful in borrowing the imperfections of that great poet, than in their imitations of his beauties.

 He

He alone had remained on the coaſt, with the daughter of Torthóma. "Son of the times of old!" ſhe ſaid, "I hear the noiſe of death. Thy friends have met with Uthal, and the chief is low! O that I had remained on the rock, incloſed with the tumbling waves! Then would my ſoul be ſad, but his death would not reach my ear. Art thou fallen on thy heath, O ſon of high Finthormo! Thou didſt leave me on a rock, but my ſoul was full of thee. Son of high Finthormo! art thou fallen on thy heath?"

She roſe pale in her tears. She ſaw the bloody ſhield of Uthal. She ſaw it in Oſſian's hand. Her ſteps were diſtracted on the heath. She flew. She found him. She fell. Her ſoul came forth in a ſigh. Her hair is ſpread on his face. My burſting tears deſcend. A tomb aroſe on the unhappy. My ſong of woe was heard. "Reſt, hapleſs children of youth! Reſt at the noiſe of that moſſy ſtream! The virgins will ſee your tomb, at the chaſe, and turn away their weeping eyes. Your fame will be in ſong. The voice of the harp will be heard in your praiſe. The daughters of Selma ſhall hear it! your renown ſhall be in other lands. Reſt, children of youth, at the noiſe of the moſſy ſtream!"

Two days we remained on the coaſt. The heroes of Berrathon convened. We brought

Larthmor

Larthmor to his halls. The feaſt of ſhells is ſpread. The joy of the aged was great. He looked to the arms of his fathers: the arms which he left in his hall, when the pride of Uthal roſe. We were renowned before Larthmor. He bleſſed the chiefs of Morven. He knew not that his ſon was low, the ſtately ſtrength of Uthal! They had told, that he had retired to the woods, with the tears of grief. They had told it, but he was ſilent in the tomb of Rothma's heath.

On the fourth day we raiſed our ſails, to the roar of the northern wind. Larthmor came to the coaſt. His bards exalted the ſong. The joy of the king was great, he looked to Rothma's gloomy heath. He ſaw the tomb of his ſon. The memory of Uthal roſe. "Who of my heroes," he ſaid, "lies there? he ſeems to have been of the kings of men. Was he renowned in my halls before the pride of Uthal roſe?" Ye are ſilent, ſons of Berrathon! is the king of heroes low? My heart melts for thee, O Uthal! though thy hand was againſt thy father. O that I had remained in the cave! that my ſon had dwelt in Finthormo! I might have heard the tread of his feet, when he went to the chaſe of the boar. I might have heard his voice on the blaſt of my cave. Then would my ſoul be glad: but now darkneſs dwells in my halls."

 Such

Such were my deeds, ſon of Alpin, when the arm of my youth was ſtrong. Such the * actions of Toſcar, the car-borne ſon of Conloch. But Toſcar is on his flying cloud. I am alone at Lutha. My voice is like the laſt ſound of the wind, when it forſakes the woods. But Oſſian ſhall not be long alone. He ſees the miſt that ſhall receive his ghoſt. He beholds the miſt that ſhall form his robe, when he appears on his hills. The ſons of feeble men ſhall behold me, and admire the ſtature of the chiefs of old. They ſhall creep to their caves. They ſhall look to the ſky with fear: for my ſteps ſhall be in the clouds. Darkneſs ſhall roll on my ſide.

Lead, ſon of Alpin, lead the aged to his woods. The winds begin to riſe. The dark wave of the lake reſounds. Bends there not a tree from Mora with its branches bare? It bends, ſon of Alpin, in the ruſtling blaſt. My harp hangs on a blaſted branch. The ſound of its ſtrings is mournful. Does the wind touch thee, O harp, or is it ſome paſſing ghoſt! It is the hand of Malvina! Bring me the harp, ſon of Alpin. Another ſong ſhall riſe. My ſoul ſhall depart in the ſound. My fathers ſhall hear it in their airy hall. Their dim faces ſhall hang, with joy, from their clouds; and their hands receive their ſon. The aged oak bends over the ſtream. It ſighs with all its moſs. The

* Oſſian ſpeaks.

withered

withered fern whistles near, and mixes, as it waves, with Ossian's hair.

"Strike the harp, and raise the song: be near, with all your wings, ye winds. Bear the mournful sound away to Fingal's airy hall. Bear it to Fingal's hall, that he may hear the voice of his son: the voice of him that praised the mighty!"

"The blast of north opens thy gates, O king! I behold thee sitting on mist, dimly gleaming in all thine arms. Thy form now is not the terror of the valiant. It is like a watery cloud; when we see the stars behind it, with their weeping eyes. Thy shield is the aged moon: thy sword a vapour half-kindled with fire. Dim and feeble is the chief, who travelled in brightness before! But thy steps * are on the winds of the desert. The storms are darkening in thy hand. Thou takest the sun in thy wrath, and hidest him in thy clouds. The sons of little men are afraid. A thousand showers descend. But when thou comest forth in thy mildness; the gale of the morning is near thy course. The sun laughs in his blue fields. The grey

* This description of the power of Fingal over the winds and storms, and the image of his taking the sun, and hiding him in the clouds, do not correspond with the preceding paragraph, where he is represented as a feeble ghost, and no more the TERROR OF THE VALIANT; but it agrees with the notion of the times concerning the souls of the deceased, who, it was supposed, had the command of the winds and storms, but took no concern in the affairs of men.

ſtream winds in its vale. The buſhes ſhake their green heads in the wind. The roes bound towards the deſert.

"There is a murmur in the heath! the ſtormy winds abate! I hear the voice of Fingal. Long has it been abſent from mine ear! "Come, Oſſian, come away," he ſays. Fingal has received his fame. We paſſed away, like flames that had ſhone for a ſeaſon. Our departure was in renown. Though the plains of our battles are dark and ſilent; our fame is in the four grey ſtones. The voice of Oſſian has been heard. The harp has been ſtrung in Selma. "Come, Oſſian, come away," he ſays, "come, fly with thy fathers on clouds." I come, I come, thou king of men! The life of Oſſian fails. I begin to vaniſh on Cona. My ſteps are not ſeen in Selma. Beſide the ſtone of Mora I ſhall fall aſleep. The winds whiſtling in my grey hair, ſhall not awaken me. Depart on thy wings, O wind! thou canſt not diſturb the reſt of the bard. The night is long, but his eyes are heavy. Depart, thou ruſtling blaſt."

"But why art thou ſad, ſon of Fingal? Why grows the cloud of thy ſoul? The chiefs of other times are departed. They have gone without their fame. The ſons of future years ſhall paſs away. Another race ſhall ariſe. The people are like the waves of ocean: like the leaves of woody Morven, they paſs away in the ruſtling blaſt, and other leaves lift their green heads on high."

Did

Did thy beauty laſt, O Ryno*? Stood the ſtrength of car-borne Oſcar? Fingal himſelf departed. The halls of his fathers forgot his ſteps. Shalt thou then remain, thou aged bard! when the mighty have failed?

* Ryno, the ſon of Fingal, who was killed in Ireland, in the war againſt Swaran, was remarkable for the beauty of his perſon, his ſwiftneſs, and great exploits. Minvâne, the daughter of Morni, and ſiſter to Gaul, was in love with Ryno. Her lamentation over her lover follows.

SHE bluſhing ſad, from Morven's rocks, bends over the darkly-rolling ſea. She ſees the youth in all their arms. Where, Ryno, where art thou?

Our dark looks told that he was low! That pale the hero flew on clouds! That in the graſs of Morven's hills, his feeble voice was heard in wind!

And is the ſon of Fingal fallen on Ullin's moſſy plains? Strong was the arm that vanquiſhed him! Ah me! I am alone!

Alone I ſhall not be, ye winds! that lift my dark-brown hair. My ſighs ſhall not long mix with your ſtream; for I muſt ſleep with Ryno.

I ſee thee not, with beauty's ſteps, returning from the chaſe. The night is round Minvâne's love. Dark ſilence dwells with Ryno.

Where are thy dogs, and where thy bow? Thy ſhield that was ſo ſtrong? Thy ſword like heaven's deſcending fire? The bloody ſpear of Ryno?

I ſee them mixed in thy deep ſhip; I ſee them ſtained with blood. No arms are in thy narrow hall, O darkly-dwelling Ryno?

When will the morning come, and ſay, "Ariſe, thou king of ſpears! ariſe, the hunters are abroad. The hinds are near thee, Ryno!"

Away, thou fair-haired morning, away! the ſlumbering king hears thee not! The hinds bound over his narrow tomb; for death dwells round young Ryno.

But

failed? But my fame ſhall remain, and grow like the oak of Morven; which lifts its broad head to the ſtorm, and rejoices in the courſe of the wind!

But I will tread ſoftly, my king! and ſteal to the bed of thy repoſe. Minvâne will lie in ſilence, nor diſturb the ſlumbering Ryno.

The maids ſhall ſeek me: but they ſhall not find me: they ſhall follow my departure with ſongs. But I ſhall not hear you, O maids! I ſleep with fair-haired Ryno.

A

DISSERTATION

CONCERNING THE

ÆRA OF OSSIAN.

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INQUIRIES into the antiquities of nations afford more pleasure than any real advantage to mankind. The ingenious may form systems of history on probabilities and a few facts; but, at a great distance of time, their accounts must be vague and uncertain. The infancy of states and kingdoms is as destitute of great events, as of the means of transmitting them to posterity. The arts of polished life, by which alone facts can be preserved with certainty, are the production of a well-formed community. It is then historians begin to write, and public transactions to be worthy remembrance. The actions of former times are left in obscurity, or magnified by uncertain traditions. Hence it is that we find so much of the marvellous in the origin of every nation; posterity being always ready to believe any thing, however fabulous, that reflects honour on their ancestors.

The

The Greeks and Romans were remarkable for this weakneſs. They ſwallowed the moſt abſurd fables concerning the high antiquities of their reſpective nations. Good hiſtorians, however, roſe very early amongſt them, and tranſmitted, with luſtre, their great actions to poſterity. It is to them that they owe that unrivalled fame they now enjoy, while the great actions of other nations are involved in fables, or loſt in obſcurity. The Celtic nations afford a ſtriking inſtance of this kind. They, though once the maſters of Europe from the mouth of the river Oby *, in Ruſſia, to Cape Finiſterre, the weſtern point of Gallicia in Spain, are very little mentioned in hiſtory. They truſted their fame to tradition and the ſongs of their bards, which, by the viciſſitude of human affairs, are long ſince loſt. Their ancient language is the only monument that remains of them; and the traces of it being found in places ſo widely diſtant from each other, ſerves only to ſhew the extent of their ancient power, but throws very little light on their hiſtory.

Of all the Celtic nations, that which poſſeſſed old Gaul is the moſt renowned; not perhaps on account of worth ſuperior to the reſt, but for their wars with a people who had hiſtorians to tranſmit the fame of their enemies, as well as their own, to poſterity. Britain was firſt peopled by them, according to the teſti-

* Plin. l. 6.

mony

mony of the best authors *; its situation in respect to Gaul makes the opinion probable; but what puts it beyond all dispute, is, that the same customs and language prevailed among the inhabitants of both in the days of Julius Cæsar †.

The colony from Gaul possessed themselves, at first, of that part of Britain which was next to their own country; and spreading northward, by degrees, as they increased in numbers, peopled the whole island. Some adventurers passing over from those parts of Britain that are within sight of Ireland, were the founders of the Irish nation: which is a more probable story than the idle fables of Milesian and Gallician colonies. Diodorus Siculus ‡ mentions it as a thing well known in his time, that the inhabitants of Ireland were originally Britons, and his testimony is unquestionable, when we consider that, for many ages, the language and customs of both nations were the same.

Tacitus was of opinion that the ancient Caledonians were of German extract; but even the ancient Germans themselves were Gauls. The present Germans, properly so called, were not the same with the ancient Celtæ. The manners and customs of the two nations were similar; but their language different. The Germans § are the genuine de-

* Cæs. l. 5. Tac. Agric. c. 2. † Cæsar. Pomp. Mel. Tacitus. ‡ Diod. Sic. l. 5.

§ Strabo, l. 7.

 scendants

ſcendants of the ancient Scandinavians, who croſſed, at an early period, the Baltic. The Celtæ*, anciently, ſent many colonies into Germany, all of whom retained their own laws, language, and cuſtoms, till they were diſſipated, in the Roman empire; and it is of them, if any colonies came from Germany into Scotland, that the ancient Caledonians were deſcended.

But whether the Caledonians were a colony of the Celtic Germans, or the ſame with the Gauls that firſt poſſeſſed themſelves of Britain, is a matter of no moment at this diſtance of time. Whatever their origin was, we find them very numerous in the time of Julius Agricola, which is a preſumption that they were long before ſettled in the country. The form of their government was a mixture of ariſtocracy and monarchy, as it was in all the countries where the Druids bore the chief ſway. This order of men ſeems to have been formed on the ſame principles with the Dactyli Idæ and Curetes of the ancients. Their pretended intercourſe with heaven, their magic and divination were the ſame. The knowledge of the Druids in natural cauſes, and the properties of certain things, the fruit of the experiments of ages, gained them a mighty reputation among the people. The eſteem of the populace ſoon increaſed into a veneration for the order; which theſe cunning and am-

* Cæſ. l. 6. Liv. l. 5. Tac. de Mor. Germ.

bitious

bitious priests took care to improve, to such a degree, that they, in a manner, ingrossed the management of civil, as well as religious, matters. It is generally allowed that they did not abuse this extraordinary power; the preserving the character of sanctity was so essential to their influence, that they never broke out into violence or oppression. The chiefs were allowed to execute the laws, but the legislative power was entirely in the hands of the Druids *. It was by their authority that the tribes were united, in times of the greatest danger, under one head. This temporary king or Vergobretus †, was chosen by them, and generally laid down his office at the end of the war. These priests enjoyed long this extraordinary privilege among the Celtic nations who lay beyond the pale of the Roman empire. It was in the beginning of the second century that their power among the Caledonians began to decline. The traditions concerning Trathal and Cormac, ancestors to Fingal, are full of the particulars of the fall of the Druids: a singular fate, it must be owned, of priests, who had once established their superstition.

The continual wars of the Caledonians against the Romans hindered the better sort from initiating themselves, as the custom formerly was, into the order of the Druids. The precepts of their religion were confined to a few,

* Cæs. l. 6.

† Fer-gubreth, *the man to judge*.

few, and were not much attended to by a people inured to war. The Vergobretus, or chief magiſtrate, was choſen without the concurrence of the hierarchy, or continued in his office againſt their will. Continual power ſtrengthened his intereſt among the tribes, and enabled him to ſend down, as hereditary to his poſterity, the office he had only received himſelf by election.

On occaſion of a new war againſt the *King of the World*, as tradition emphatically calls the Roman emperor, the Druids, to vindicate the honour of the order, began to reſume their ancient privilege of chuſing the Vergobretus. Garmal, the ſon of Tarno, being deputed by them, came to the grandfather of the celebrated Fingal, who was then Vergobretus, and commanded him, in the name of the whole order, to lay down his office. Upon his refuſal, a civil war commenced, which ſoon ended in almoſt the total extinction of the religious order of the Druids. A few that remained, retired to the dark receſſes of their groves, and the caves they had formerly uſed for their meditations. It is then we find them in *the circle of ſtones*, and unheeded by the world. A total diſregard for the order, and utter abhorrence of the Druidical rites enſued. Under this cloud of public hate, all that had any knowledge of the religion of the Druids became extinct, and the nation fell into the laſt degree of ignorance of their rites and ceremonies.

 It

It is no matter of wonder then, that Fingal and his ſon Oſſian diſliked the Druids, who were the declared enemies to their ſucceſſion in the ſupreme magiſtracy. It is a ſingular caſe, it muſt be allowed, that there are no traces of religion in the poems aſcribed to Oſſian, as the poetical compoſitions of other nations are ſo cloſely connected with their mythology. But gods are not neceſſary, when the poet has genius. It is hard to account for it to thoſe who are not made acquainted with the manner of the old Scottiſh bards. That race of men carried their notions of martial honour to an extravagant pitch. Any aid given their heroes in battle, was thought to derogate from their fame; and the bards immediately transferred the glory of the action to him who had given that aid.

Had the poet brought down gods, as often as Homer had done, to aſſiſt his heroes, his work had not conſiſted of eulogiums on men, but of hymns to ſuperior beings. Thoſe who write in the Galic language ſeldom mention religion in their profane poetry; and when they profeſſedly write of religion, they never mix, with their compoſitions, the actions of their heroes. This cuſtom alone, even though the religion of the Druids had not been previouſly extinguiſhed, may, in ſome meaſure, excuſe the author's ſilence concerning the religion of ancient times.

To allege, that a nation is void of all religion, would betray ignorance of the hiſtory of

mankind. The traditions of their fathers, and their own obſervations on the works of nature, together with that ſuperſtition which is inherent in the human frame, have, in all ages, raiſed in the minds of men ſome idea of a ſuperior being. Hence it is, that in the darkeſt times, and amongſt the moſt barbarous nations, the very populace themſelves had ſome faint notion, at leaſt, of a divinity. The Indians, who worſhip no God, believe that he exiſts. It would be doing injuſtice to the author of theſe poems, to think, that he had not opened his conceptions to that primitive and greateſt of all truths. But let his religion be what it will, it is certain he has not alluded to Chriſtianity, or any of its rites, in his poems; which ought to fix his opinions, at leaſt, to an æra prior to that religion. Conjectures, on this ſubject, muſt ſupply the place of proof. The perſecution begun by Diocleſian, in the year 303, is the moſt probable time in which the firſt dawning of Chriſtianity in the north of Britain can be fixed. The humane and mild character of Conſtantius Chlorus, who commanded then in Britain, induced the perſecuted Chriſtians to take refuge under him. Some of them, through a zeal to propagate their tenets, or through fear, went beyond the pale of the Roman empire, and ſettled among the Caledonians; who were ready to hearken to their doctrines, if the religion of the Druids was exploded long before.

These

These miſſionaries, either through choice, or to give more weight to the doctrine they advanced, took poſſeſſion of the cells and groves of the Druids; and it was from this retired life they had the name of *Culdees* *, which, in the language of the country, ſignified *ſequeſtered perſons*. It was with one of the *Culdees* that Oſſian, in his extreme old age, is ſaid to have diſputed concerning the Chriſtian religion. This diſpute, they ſay, is extant, and is couched in verſe, according to the cuſtom of the times. The extreme ignorance on the part of Oſſian of the Chriſtian tenets, ſhews, that that religion had only lately been introduced, as it is not eaſy to conceive, how one of the firſt rank could be totally unacquainted with a religion that had been known for any time in the country. The diſpute bears the genuine marks of antiquity. The obſolete phraſes and expreſſions peculiar to the times, prove it to be no forgery. If Oſſian then lived at the introduction of Chriſtianity, as by all appearance he did, his epoch will be the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century. Tradition here ſteps in with a kind of proof.

The exploits of Fingal againſt Caracul †, the ſon of the *king of the world*, are among

* Culdich.

† Carac'huil, *terrible eye*. Carac-'healla, *terrible look*. Carac-challamh, *a ſort of upper garment*.

the firſt brave actions of his youth. A complete poem, which relates to this ſubject, is printed in this collection.

In the year 210 the emperor Severus, after returning from his expedition againſt the Caledonians, at York fell into the tedious illneſs of which he afterwards died. The Caledonians and Maiatæ, reſuming courage from his indiſpoſition, took arms in order to recover the poſſeſſions they had loſt. The enraged emperor commanded his army to march into their country, and to deſtroy it with fire and ſword. His orders were but ill executed, for his ſon, Caracalla, was at the head of the army, and his thoughts were entirely taken up with the hopes of his father's death, and with ſchemes to ſupplant his brother Geta.—He ſcarcely had entered the enemy's country, when news was brought him that Severus was dead.—A ſudden peace is patched up with the Caledonians, and, as it appears from Dion Caſſius, the country they had loſt to Severus was reſtored to them.

The Caracul of Fingal is no other than Caracalla, who, as the ſon of Severus, the emperor of Rome, whoſe dominions were extended almoſt over the known world, was not without reaſon called the *Son of the King of the World*. The ſpace of time between 211, the year Severus died, and the beginning of the fourth century, is not ſo great, but Oſſian, the ſon of Fingal, might have ſeen the Chriſtians whom the perſecution under Diocleſian had

had driven beyond the pale of the Roman empire.

In one of the many lamentations of the death of Oſcar, a battle which he fought againſt Caros, king of ſhips, on the banks of the winding Carun *, is mentioned among his great actions. It is more than probable, that the Caros mentioned here, is the ſame with the noted uſurper Carauſius, who aſſumed the purple in the year 287, and ſeizing on Britain, defeated the emperor Maximinian Herculius, in ſeveral naval engagements, which gives propriety to his being called *the King of Ships*. The *winding Carun* is that ſmall river retaining ſtill the name of Carron, and runs in the neighbourhood of Agricola's wall, which Carauſius repaired to obſtruct the incurſions of the Caledonians. Several other paſſages in traditions allude to the wars of the Romans; but the two juſt mentioned clearly fix the epocha of Fingal to the third century; and this account agrees exactly with the Iriſh hiſtories, which place the death of Fingal, the ſon of Comhal, in the year 283, and that of Oſcar and their own celebrated Cairbre, in the year 296.

Some people may imagine, that the alluſions to the Roman hiſtory might have been derived, by tradition, from learned men, more than from ancient poems. This muſt then have happened at leaſt three ages ago, as theſe

* Car-avon, *winding river*.

allusions are mentioned often in the compositions of those times.

Every one knows what a cloud of ignorance and barbarism overspread the north of Europe three hundred years ago. The minds of men, addicted to superstition, contracted a narrowness that destroyed genius. Accordingly we find the compositions of those times trivial and puerile to the last degree. But let it be allowed, that, amidst all the untoward circumstances of the age, a genius might arise; it is not easy to determine what could induce him to allude to the Roman times. We find no fact to favour any designs which could be entertained by any man who lived in the fifteenth century.

The strongest objection to the antiquity of the poems now given to the public under the name of Ossian, is the improbability of their being handed down by tradition through so many centuries. Ages of barbarism, some will say, could not produce poems abounding with the disinterested and generous sentiments so conspicuous in the compositions of Ossian; and could these ages produce them, it is impossible but they must be lost, or altogether corrupted in a long succession of barbarous generations.

These objections naturally suggest themselves to men unacquainted with the ancient state of the northern parts of Britain. The bards, who were an inferior order of the Druids, did not share their bad fortune. They were spared by the victorious king, as it was through

through their means only be could hope for immortality to his fame. They attended him in the camp, and contributed to eſtabliſh his power by their ſongs. His great actions were magnified, and the populace, who had no ability to examine into his character narrowly, were dazzled with his fame in the rhimes of the bards. In the mean time, men aſſumed ſentiments that are rarely to be met with in an age of barbariſm. The bards, who were originally the diſciples of the Druids, had their minds opened, and their ideas enlarged, by being initiated into the learning of that celebrated order. They could form a perfect hero in their own minds, and aſcribe that character to their prince. The inferior chiefs made this ideal character the model of their conduct; and, by degrees, brought their minds to that generous ſpirit which breathes in all the poetry of the times. The prince, flattered by his bards, and rivalled by his own heroes, who imitated his character as deſcribed in the eulogies of his poets, endeavoured to excel his people in merit, as he was above them in ſtation. This emulation continuing, formed at laſt the general character of the nation, happily compounded of what is noble in barbarity, and virtuous and generous in a poliſhed people.

When virtue in peace, and bravery in war, are the characteriſtics of a nation, their actions become intereſting, and their fame worthy of immortality. A generous ſpirit is warmed with noble actions, and becomes ambitious of

perpetuating

perpetuating them. This is the true ſource of that divine inſpiration, to which the poets of all ages pretended. When they found their themes inadequate to the warmth of their imaginations, they varniſhed them over with fables, ſupplied by their own fancy, or furniſhed by abſurd traditions. Theſe fables, however ridiculous, had their abettors; poſterity either implicitly believed them, or, through a vanity natural to mankind, pretended that they did. They loved to place the founders of their families in the days of fable, when poetry, without the fear of contradiction, could give what character ſhe pleaſed of her heroes. It is to this vanity that we owe the preſervation of what remain of the more ancient poems. Their poetical merit made their heroes famous in a country where heroiſm was much eſteemed, and admired. The poſterity of thoſe heroes, or thoſe who pretended to be deſcended from them, heard with pleaſure the eulogiums of their anceſtors; bards were employed to repeat the poems, and to record the connection of their patrons with chiefs ſo renowned. Every chief in proceſs of time had a bard in his family, and the office became at laſt hereditary. By the ſucceſſion of theſe bards, the poems concerning the anceſtors of the family were handed down from generation to generation; they were repeated to the whole clan on ſolemn occaſions, and always alluded to in the new compoſitions of the bards. This cuſtom came down

down to near our own times; and after the bards were discontinued, a great number in a clan retained by memory, or committed to writing, their compositions, and founded the antiquity of their families on the authority of their poems.

The use of letters was not known in the north of Europe till long after the institution of the bards: the records of the families of their patrons, their own, and more ancient poems, were handed down by tradition. Their poetical compositions were admirably contrived for that purpose. They were adapted to music; and the most perfect harmony was observed. Each verse was so connected with those which preceded or followed it, that if one line had been remembered in a stanza, it was almost impossible to forget the rest. The cadences followed in so natural a gradation, and the words were so adapted to the common turn of the voice, after it is raised to a certain key, that it was almost impossible, from a similarity of sound, to substitute one word for another. This excellence is peculiar to the Celtic tongue, and is perhaps to be met with in no other language. Nor does this choice of words clog the sense or weaken the expression. The numerous flections of consonants, and variation in declension, make the language very copious.

The descendants of the Celtæ, who inhabited Britain and its isles, were not singular in this method of preserving the most precious monuments

monuments of their nation. The ancient laws of the Greeks were couched in verſe, and handed down by tradition. The Spartans, through a long habit, became ſo fond of this cuſtom, that they would never allow their laws to be committed to writing. The actions of great men, and the eulogiums of kings and heroes, were preſerved in the ſame manner. All the hiſtorical monuments of the old Germans were comprehended in their ancient ſongs *; which were either hymns to their gods, or elegies in praiſe of their heroes, and were intended to perpetuate the great events in their nation which were carefully interwoven with them. This ſpecies of compoſition was not committed to writing, but delivered by oral tradition †. The care they took to have the poems taught to their children the uninterrupted cuſtom of repeating them upon certain occaſions, and the happy meaſure of the verſe, ſerved to preſerve them for a long time uncorrupted. This oral chronicle of the Germans was not forgot in the eighth century; and it probably would have remained to this day, had not learning, which thinks every thing, that is not committed to writing, fabulous, been introduced. It was from poetical traditions that Garcilaſſo compoſed his account of the Yncas of Peru. The Peruvians had loſt all other monuments of their hiſtory, and it was from ancient poems, which his

* Tacitus de Mor. Germ.

† *Abbé de la Bleterie Remarques ſur la Germaine.*

mother, a princeſs of the blood of the Yncas, taught him in his youth, that he collected the materials of his hiſtory. If other nations then, that had often been overrun by enemies, and had ſent abroad and received colonies, could for many ages preſerve, by oral tradition, their laws and hiſtories uncorrupted, it is much more probable that the ancient *Scots, a people ſo free of intermixture with foreigners, and ſo ſtrongly attached to the memory of their anceſtors, had the works of their bards handed down with great purity.

What is advanced, in this ſhort Diſſertation, it muſt be confeſſed, is mere conjecture. Beyond the reach of records, is ſettled a gloom, which no ingenuity can penetrate. The manners deſcribed, in theſe poems, ſuit the ancient Celtic times, and no other period that is known in hiſtory. We muſt, therefore, place the heroes far back in antiquity; and it matters little, who were their contemporaries in other parts of the world. If we have placed Fingal in his proper period, we do honour to the manners of barbarous times. He exerciſed every manly virtue in Caledonia, while Heliogabulus diſgraced human nature at Rome.

A DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE POEMS OF OSSIAN.

A

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THE hiſtory of thoſe nations, who originally poſſeſſed the north of Europe, is leſs known than their manners. Deſtitute of the uſe of letters, they themſelves had not the means of tranſmitting their great actions to remote poſterity. Foreign writers ſaw them only at a diſtance, and deſcribed them as they found them. The vanity of the Romans induced them to conſider the nations beyond the pale of their empire as barbarians; and conſequently their hiſtory unworthy of being inveſtigated. Their manners and ſingular character were matters of curioſity, as they committed them to record. Some men, otherwiſe of great merit among ourſelves, give into confined ideas on this ſubject. Having early imbibed their idea of exalted manners from the Greek and Roman writers, they ſcarcely ever afterwards have the fortitude to allow any dignity of character to any nation deſtitute of the uſe of letters.

Without derogating from the fame of Greece and Rome, we may consider antiquity beyond the pale of their empire worthy of some attention. The nobler passions of the mind never shoot forth more free and unrestrained than in the times we call barbarous. That irregular manner of life, and those manly pursuits from which barbarity takes its name, are highly favourable to a strength of mind unknown in polished times. In advanced society the characters of men are more uniform and disguised. The human passions lie in some degree concealed behind forms, and artificial manners; and the powers of the soul, without an opportunity of exerting them, lose their vigour. The times of regular government, and polished manners, are therefore to be wished for by the feeble and weak in mind. An unsettled state, and those convulsions which attend it, is the proper field for an exalted character, and the exertion of great parts. Merit there rises always superior; no fortuitous event can raise the timid and mean into power. To those who look upon antiquity in this light, it is an agreeable prospect; and they alone can have real pleasure in tracing nations to their source.

The establishment of the Celtic states, in the north of Europe, is beyond the reach of written annals. The traditions and songs to which they trusted their history, were lost, or altogether corrupted, in their revolutions and migrations, which were so frequent and uni-

verſal, that no kingdom in Europe is now poſſeſſed by its original inhabitants. Societies were formed, and kingdoms erected, from a mixture of nations, who, in proceſs of time, loſt all knowledge of their own origin. If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people, from all time, free from intermixture with foreigners. We are to look for theſe among the mountains and inacceſſible parts of a country: places, on account of their barrenneſs, uninviting to an enemy, or whoſe natural ſtrength enabled the natives to repel invaſions. Such are the inhabitants of the mountains of Scotland. We, accordingly, find, that they differ materially from thoſe who poſſeſs the low and more fertile part of the kingdom. Their language is pure and original, and their manners are thoſe of an ancient and unmixed race of men. Conſcious of their own antiquity, they long deſpiſed others, as a new and mixed people. As they lived in a country only fit for paſture, they were free from that toil and buſineſs, which engroſs the attention of a commercial people. Their amuſement conſiſted in hearing or repeating their ſongs and traditions, and theſe entirely turned on the antiquity of their nation, and the exploits of their forefathers. It is no wonder, therefore, that there are more remains of antiquity among them, than among any other people in Europe. Traditions, however, concerning remote periods are only to be regarded in ſo far as they coincide with

cotemporary writers of undoubted credit and veracity.

No writers began their accounts from a more early period, than the hiftorians of the Scots nation. Without records, or even tradition itfelf, they give a long lift of ancient kings, and a detail of their tranfactions, with a fcrupulous exactnefs. One might naturally fuppofe, that, when they had no authentic annals, they fhould, at leaft, have recourfe to the traditions of their country, and have reduced them into a regular fyftem of hiftory. Of both they feem to have been equally deftitute. Born in the low country, and ftrangers to the ancient language of their nation, they contented themfelves with copying from one another, and retailing the fame fictions, in a new colour and drefs.

John Fordun was the firft who collected thofe fragments of the Scots hiftory, which had efcaped the brutal policy of Edward I. and reduced them into order. His accounts, in fo far as they concerned recent tranfactions, deferved credit: beyond a certain period, they were fabulous and unfatisfactory. Some time before Fordun wrote, the king of England, in a letter to the pope, had run up the antiquity of his nation to a very remote æra. Fordun, poffeffed of all the national prejudice of the age, was unwilling that his country fhould yield, in point of antiquity, to a people, then its rivals and enemies. Deftitute of annals in Scotland, he had recourfe to Ireland, which,

according to the vulgar errors of the times, was reckoned the first habitation of the Scots. He found, there, that the Irish bards had carried their pretensions to antiquity as high, if not beyond any nation in Europe. It was from them he took those improbable fictions, which form the first part of his history.

The writers that succeeded Fordun implicitly followed his system, though they sometimes varied from him in their relations of particular transactions and the order of succession of their kings. As they had no new lights, and were, equally with him, unacquainted with the traditions of their country, their histories contain little information concerning the origin of the Scots. Even Buchanan himself, except the elegance and vigour of his style, has very little to recommend him. Blinded with political prejudices, he seemed more anxious to turn the fictions of his predecessors to his own purposes, than to detect their misrepresentations, or investigate truth amidst the darkness which they had thrown round it. It therefore appears, that little can be collected from their own historians, concerning the first migration of the Scots into Britain.

That this island was peopled from Gaul admits of no doubt. Whether colonies came afterwards from the north of Europe is a matter of mere speculation. When South Britain yielded to the power of the Romans, the unconquered nations to the north of the province

vince were diſtinguiſhed by the name of *Caledonians*. From their very name, it appears, that they were of thoſe *Gauls*, who poſſeſſed themſelves originally of Britain. It is compounded of two *Celtic* words, *Caël* ſignifying *Celts*, or *Gauls*, and *Dun* or *Don*, *a hill*; ſo that *Cael-don*, or Caledonians, is as much as to ſay, the *Celts of the hill country*. The Highlanders, to this day, call themſelves *Caël*, and their language *Caëlic*, or *Galic*, and their country *Caëldoch*, which the Romans ſoftened into *Caledonia*. This, of itſelf, is ſufficient to demonſtrate, they are the genuine deſcendants of the ancient Caledonians, and not a pretended colony of *Scots*, who ſettled firſt in the north, in the third or fourth century.

From the double meaning of the word *Cael*, which ſignifies *ſtrangers*, as well as *Gauls*, or *Celts*, ſome have imagined, that the anceſtors of the Caledonians were of a different race from the reſt of the Britons, and that they received their name upon that account. This opinion, ſay they, is ſupported by Tacitus, who, from ſeveral circumſtances, concludes, that the Caledonians were of German extraction. A diſcuſſion of a point ſo intricate, at this diſtance of time, could neither be ſatisfactory nor important.

Towards the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century, we meet with the *Scots* in the north. Porphyrius * makes the firſt mention of them about that

* St. Hierom. ad Cteſiphon.

time. As the *Scots* were not heard of before that period, moſt writers ſuppoſed them to have been a colony, newly come to Britain, and that the *Picts* were the only genuine deſcendants of the ancient Caledonians. This miſtake is eaſily removed. The Caledonians, in proceſs of time, became naturally divided into two diſtinct nations, as poſſeſſing parts of the country entirely different in their nature and ſoil. The weſtern coaſt of Scotland is hilly and barren; towards the eaſt the country is plain, and fit for tillage. The inhabitants of the mountains, a roving and uncontrouled race of men, lived by feeding of cattle, and what they killed in hunting. Their employment did not fix them to one place. They removed from one heath to another, as ſuited beſt with their convenience or inclination. They were not, therefore, improperly called, by their neighbours, SCUITE, or *the wandering nation*; which is evidently the origin of the Roman name of *Scoti*.

On the other hand, the Caledonians, who poſſeſſed the eaſt coaſt of Scotland, as the diviſion of the country was plain and fertile, applied themſelves to agriculture, and raiſing of corn. It was from this, that the Galic name of the *Picts* proceeded; for they are called, in that language, *Cruithnich*, i. e. *the wheat or corn-eaters*. As the Picts lived in a country ſo different in its nature from that poſſeſſed by the Scots, ſo their national character ſuffered a material change. Unobſtructed

ſtructed by mountains, or lakes, their communication with one another was free and frequent. Society, therefore, became ſooner eſtabliſhed among them, than among the Scots, and, conſequently, they were much ſooner governed by civil magiſtrates and laws. This, at laſt, produced ſo great a difference in the manners of the two nations, that they began to forget their common origin, and almoſt continual quarrels and animoſities ſubſiſted between them. Theſe animoſities, after ſome ages, ended in the ſubverſion of the Pictiſh kingdom, but not in the total extirpation of the nation, according to moſt of the Scots writers, who ſeem to think it more for the honour of their countrymen to annihilate, than reduce a rival people under their obedience. It is certain, however, that the very name of the Picts was loſt, and thoſe that remained were ſo completely incorporated with their conquerors, that they ſoon loſt all memory of their own origin.

The end of the Pictiſh government is placed ſo near that period, to which authentic annals reach, that it is matter of wonder, that we have no monuments of their language or hiſtory remaining. This favours the ſyſtem I have laid down. Had they originally been of a different race from the Scots, their language of courſe would be different. The contrary is the caſe. The names of places in the Pictiſh dominions, and the very names of their kings, which are handed down to

us, are of Galic original, which is a convincing proof, that the two nations were, of old, one and the ſame, and only divided into two governments, by the effect which their ſituation had upon the genius of the people.

The name of *Picts* is ſaid to have been given by the Romans to the Caledonians, who poſſeſſed the eaſt coaſt of Scotland, from their painting their bodies. The ſtory is ſilly and the argument abſurd. But let us revere antiquity in her very follies. This circumſtance made ſome imagine, that the Picts were of Britiſh extract, and a different race of men from the Scots. That more of the Britons, who fled northward from the tyranny of the Romans, ſettled in the low country of Scotland, than among the Scots of the mountains, may be eaſily imagined, from the very nature of the country. It was they who introduced painting among the Picts. From this circumſtance, affirm ſome antiquaries, proceeded the name of the latter, to diſtinguiſh them from the Scots, who never had that art among them, and from the Britons, who diſcontinued it after the Roman conqueſt.

The Caledonians, moſt certainly, acquired a conſiderable knowledge in navigation, by their living on a coaſt interſected with many arms of the ſea, and in iſlands, divided, one from another, by wide and dangerous firths. It is, therefore, highly probable, that they very early found their way to the north of Ireland,

Ireland, which is within ſight of their own country. That Ireland was firſt peopled from Britain, is, at length, a matter that admits of no doubt. The vicinity of the two iſlands; the exact correſpondence of the ancient inhabitants of both, in point of manners and language, are ſufficient proofs, even if we had not the teſtimony of * authors of undoubted veracity to confirm it. The abettors of the moſt romantic ſyſtems of Iriſh antiquities allow it; but they place the colony from Britain in an improbable and remote æra. I ſhall eaſily admit, that the colony of the *Firbolg*, confeſſedly the *Belgæ* of Britain, ſettled in the ſouth of Ireland, before the *Caël*, or Caledonians, diſcovered the north: but it is not at all likely, that the migration of the Firbolg to Ireland happened many centuries before the Chriſtian æra.

The poem of Temora throws conſiderable light on this ſubject. The accounts given in it agree ſo well with what the ancients have delivered concerning the firſt population and inhabitants of Ireland, that every unbiaſſed perſon will confeſs them more probable than the legends handed down, by tradition, in that country. It appears, that, in the days of Trathal, grandfather to Fingal, Ireland was poſſeſſed by two nations; the *Firbolg* or *Belgæ* of Britain, who inhabited the ſouth, and the *Caël*, who paſſed over from Caledonia and the Hebrides to Ulſter. The two nations, as

* Dio. Sic. l. 5.

is

is usual among an unpolished and lately settled people, were divided into small dynasties, subject to petty kings, or chiefs, independent of one another. In this situation, it is probable, they continued long, without any material revolution in the state of the island, until Crothar, lord of Atha, a country in Connaught, the most potent chief of the *Fir-bolg*, carried away Conlama, the daughter of Cathmin, a chief of the *Caël*, who possessed Ulster.

Conlama had been betrothed some time before to Turloch, a chief of their own nation. Turloch resented the affront offered him by Crothar, made an irruption into Connaught, and killed Cormul, the brother of Crothar, who came to oppose his progress. Crothar himself then took arms, and either killed or expelled Turloch. The war, upon this, became general between the two nations: and the Caël were reduced to the last extremity. In this situation, they applied, for aid, to Trathal king of Morven, who sent his brother Conar, already famous for his great exploits, to their relief. Conar, upon his arrival in Ulster, was chosen king, by the unanimous consent of the Caledonian tribes, who possessed that country. The war was renewed with vigour and success; but the *Fir-bolg* appear to have been rather repelled than subdued. In succeeding reigns, we learn, from episodes in the same poem, that the chiefs of Atha made several efforts to become mo-

narchs

narchs of Ireland, and to expel the race of Conar.

To Conar ſucceeded his ſon Cormac, who appears to have reigned long. In his latter days he ſeems to have been driven to the laſt extremity, by an inſurrection of the *Firbolg*, who ſupported the pretenſions of the chiefs of Atha to the Iriſh throne. Fingal, who then was very young, came to the aid of Cormac, totally defeated Colculla, chief of Atha, and re-eſtabliſhed Cormac in the ſole poſſeſſion of all Ireland. It was then he fell in love with, and took to wife, Roſcrana, the daughter of Cormac, who was the mother of Oſſian.

Cormac was ſucceeded in the Iriſh throne by his ſon, Cairbre: Cairbre by Artho, his ſon, who was the father of that Cormac, in whoſe minority the invaſion of Swaran happened, which is the ſubject of the poem of *Fingal*. The family of Atha, who had not relinquiſhed their pretenſions to the Iriſh throne, rebelled in the minority of Cormac, defeated his adherents, and murdered him in the palace of Temora. Cairbar, lord of Atha, upon this mounted the throne. His uſurpation ſoon ended with his life; for Fingal made an expedition into Ireland, and reſtored, after various viciſſitudes of fortune, the family of Conar to the poſſeſſion of the kingdom. This war is the ſubject of Temora; the events, though certainly heightened and embelliſhed by poetry, ſeem, notwithſtanding, to have their foundation in true hiſtory.

Temora contains not only the hiſtory of the firſt migration of the Caledonians into Ireland; it alſo preſerves ſome important facts, concerning the firſt ſettlement of the *Firbolg*, or *Belgæ of Britain*, in that kingdom, under their leader Larthon, who was anceſtor to Cairbar and Cathmor, who ſucceſſively mounted the Iriſh throne, after the death of Cormac, the ſon of Artho. I forbear to tranſcribe the paſſage, on account of its length. It is the ſong of Fonar, the bard; towards the latter end of the ſeventh book of Temora. As the generations from Larthon to Cathmor, to whom the epiſode is addreſſed, are not marked, as are thoſe of the family of Conar, the firſt king of Ireland, we can form no judgment of the time of the ſettlement of the Firbolg. It is, however, probable it was ſome time before the *Caël*, or Caledonians, ſettled in Ulſter. One important fact may be gathered from this hiſtory, that the Iriſh had no king before the latter end of the firſt century. Fingal lived, it is ſuppoſed, in the third century; ſo Conar, the firſt monarch of the Iriſh, who was his grand-uncle, cannot be placed farther back than the cloſe of the firſt. To eſtabliſh this fact, is to lay, at once, aſide the pretended antiquities of the Scots and Iriſh, and to get quit of the long liſt of kings which the latter give us for a millennium before.

Of the affairs of Scotland, it is certain, nothing can be depended upon prior to the reign of

of Fergus, the ſon of Erc, who lived in the fifth century. The true hiſtory of Ireland begins ſomewhat later than that period. Sir James Ware *, who was indefatigable in his reſearches after the antiquities of his country, rejects, as mere fiction and idle romance, all that is related of the ancient Iriſh, before the time of St. Patrick, and the reign of Leogaire. It is from this conſideration, that he begins his hiſtory at the introduction of Chriſtianity, remarking, that all that is delivered down concerning the times of paganiſm, were tales of late invention, ſtrangely mixed with anachroniſms and inconſiſtencies. Such being the opinion of Ware, who had collected, with uncommon induſtry and zeal, all the real and pretendedly ancient manuſcripts, concerning the hiſtory of his country, we may, on his authority, reject the improbable and ſelf-condemned tales of Keating and O'Flaherty. Credulous and puerile to the laſt degree, they have diſgraced the antiquities they meant to eſtabliſh. It is to be wiſhed, that ſome able Iriſhman, who underſtands the language and records of his country, may redeem, ere it is too late, the genuine antiquities of Ireland, from the hands of theſe idle fabuliſts.

By comparing the hiſtory in theſe poems with the legends of the Scots and Iriſh writers, and by afterwards examining both by

* War. de antiq. Hybern. præ. p. 1.

the teſt of the Roman authors, it is eaſy to diſcover which is the moſt probable. Probability is all that can be eſtabliſhed on the authority of tradition, ever dubious and uncertain. But when it favours the hypotheſis laid down by cotemporary writers of undoubted veracity, and, as it were, finiſhes the figure of which they only drew the outlines, it ought, in the judgment of ſober reaſon, to be preferred to accounts framed in dark and diſtant periods, with little judgment, and upon no authority.

Concerning the period of more than a century which intervenes between Fingal and the reign of Fergus, the ſon of Erc or Arcath, tradition is dark and contradictory. Some trace up the family of Fergus to a ſon of Fingal of that name, who makes a conſiderable figure in Oſſian's poems. The three elder ſons of Fingal, Oſſian, Fillan, and Ryno, dying without iſſue, the ſucceſſion, of courſe, devolved upon Fergus, the fourth ſon, and his poſterity. This Fergus, ſay ſome traditions, was the father of Congal, whoſe ſon was Arcath, the father of Fergus, properly called the firſt king of Scots, as it was in his time the *Caël*, who poſſeſſed the weſtern coaſt of Scotland, began to be diſtinguiſhed, by foreigners, by the name of *Scots*. From thenceforward, the Scots and Picts, as diſtinct nations, became objects of attention to the hiſtorians of other countries. The internal ſtate of the two Cale-

donian kingdoms has always continued, and ever muſt remain, in obſcurity and fable.

It is in this epoch we muſt fix the beginning of the decay of that ſpecies of heroiſm which ſubſiſted in the days of Fingal. There are three ſtages in human ſociety. The firſt is the reſult of conſanguinity, and the natural affection of the members of a family to one another. The ſecond begins when property is eſtabliſhed, and men enter into aſſociations for mutual defence, againſt the invaſions and injuſtice of neighbours. Mankind ſubmit, in the third, to certain laws and ſubordinations of government, to which they truſt the ſafety of their perſons and property. As the firſt is formed on nature, ſo, of courſe, it is the moſt diſintereſted and noble. Men, in the laſt, have leiſure to cultivate the mind, and to reſtore it, with reflection, to a primæval dignity of ſentiment. The middle ſtate is the region of complete barbariſm and ignorance. About the beginning of the fifth century, the Scots and Picts were advanced into the ſecond ſtage, and, conſequently, into thoſe circumſcribed ſentiments, which always diſtinguiſh barbarity. The events which ſoon after happened did not at all contribute to enlarge their ideas, or mend their national character.

About the year 426, the Romans, on account of domeſtic commotions, entirely forſook Britain, finding it impoſſible to defend ſo diſtant a frontier. The Picts and Scots, ſeizing

this

this favourable opportunity, made incurſions into the deſerted province. The Britons, enervated by the ſlavery of ſeveral centuries, and thoſe vices which are inſeparable from an advanced ſtate of civility, were not able to withſtand the impetuous, though irregular attacks of a barbarous enemy. In the utmoſt diſtreſs, they applied to their old maſters, the Romans, and (after the unfortunate ſtate of the Empire could not ſpare aid) to the Saxons, a nation equally barbarous and brave with the enemies of whom they were ſo much afraid. Though the bravery of the Saxons repelled the Caledonian nations for a time, yet the latter found means to extend themſelves, conſiderably, towards the ſouth. It is in this period we muſt place the origin of the arts of civil life among the Scots. The ſeat of government was removed from the mountains to the plain and more fertile provinces of the ſouth, to be near the common enemy, in caſe of ſudden incurſions. Inſtead of roving through unfrequented wilds, in ſearch of ſubſiſtence, by means of hunting, men applied to agriculture, and raiſing of corn. This manner of life was the firſt means of changing the national character. The next thing which contributed to it was their mixture with ſtrangers.

In the countries which the Scots had conquered from the Britons, it is probable that moſt of the old inhabitants remained. Theſe incorporating with the conquerors, taught them agriculture, and other arts, which they

themſelves had received from the Romans. The Scots, however, in number as well as power, being the moſt predominant, retained ſtill their language, and as many of the cuſtoms of their anceſtors as ſuited with the nature of the country they poſſeſſed. Even the union of the two Caledonian kingdoms did not much affect the national character. Being originally deſcended from the ſame ſtock, the manners of the Picts and Scots were as ſimilar as the different natures of the countries they poſſeſſed permitted.

What brought about a total change in the genius of the Scots nation, was their wars and other tranſactions with the Saxons. Several counties in the ſouth of Scotland were alternately poſſeſſed by the two nations. They were ceded, in the ninth age, to the Scots, and, it is probable, that moſt of the Saxon inhabitants remained in poſſeſſion of their lands. During the ſeveral conqueſts and revolutions in England, many fled, for refuge, into Scotland, to avoid the oppreſſion of foreigners, or the tyranny of domeſtic uſurpers; in ſo much, that the Saxon race formed perhaps near one half of the Scottiſh kingdom. The Saxon manners and language daily gained ground, on the tongue and cuſtoms of the ancient Caledonians, till, at laſt, the latter were entirely relegated to the inhabitants of the mountains, who were ſtill unmixed with ſtrangers.

It was after the acceſſion of territory which the Scots received, upon the retreat of the

Romans from Britain, that the inhabitants of the Highlands were divided into clans. The king, when he kept his court in the mountains, was considered, by the whole nation, as the chief of their blood. Their small number, as well as the presence of their prince, prevented those divisions, which, afterwards, sprung forth into so many separate tribes. When the seat of government was removed to the south, those who remained in the Highlands were, of course, neglected. They naturally formed themselves into small societies, independent of one another. Each society had its own *Regulus*, who either was, or in the succession of a few generations, was regarded as chief of their blood. The nature of the country favoured an institution of this sort. A few valleys, divided from one another by extensive heaths and impassable mountains, form the face of the Highlands. In these valleys the chiefs fixed their residence. Round them, and almost within sight of their dwellings, were the habitations of their relations and dependents.

The seats of the Highland chiefs were neither disagreeable nor inconvenient. Surrounded with mountains and hanging woods, they were covered from the inclemency of the weather. Near them generally ran a pretty large river, which, discharging itself not far off, into an arm of the sea, or extensive lake, swarmed with variety of fish. The woods were stocked with wild fowl; and the heaths and

mountains behind them were the natural ſeat of the red deer and roe. If we make allowance for the backward ſtate of agriculture, the valleys were not unfertile; affording, if not all the conveniencies, at leaſt the neceſſaries, of life. Here the chief lived, the ſupreme judge and lawgiver of his own people; but his ſway was neither ſevere nor unjuſt. As the populace regarded him as the chief of their blood, ſo he, in return, conſidered them as members of his family. His commands, therefore, though abſolute and deciſive, partook more of the authority of a father than of the rigour of a judge. Though the whole territory of the tribe was conſidered as the property of the chief, yet his vaſſals made him no other conſideration for their lands than ſervices, neither burdenſome nor frequent. As he ſeldom went from home, he was at no expence. His table was ſupplied by his own herds, and what his numerous attendants killed in hunting.

In this rural kind of magnificence, the Highland chiefs lived, for many ages. At a diſtance from the ſeat of government, and ſecured, by the inacceſſibleneſs of their country, they were free and independent. As they had little communication with ſtrangers, the cuſtoms of their anceſtors remained among them, and their language retained its original purity. Naturally fond of military fame, and remarkably attached to the memory of their anceſtors, they delighted in traditions and ſongs, concerning the exploits of their nation, and eſpecially

cially of their own particular families. A ſucceſſion of bards was retained in every clan, to hand down the memorable actions of their forefathers. As Fingal and his chiefs were the moſt renowned names in tradition, the bards took care to place them in the genealogy of every great family. They became famous among the people, and an object of fiction and poetry to the bards.

The bards erected their immediate patrons into heroes, and celebrated them in their ſongs. As the circle of their knowledge was narrow, their ideas were confined in proportion. A few happy expreſſions, and the manners they repreſent, may pleaſe thoſe who underſtand the language; their obſcurity and inaccuracy would diſguſt in a tranſlation. It was chiefly for this reaſon, that I have rejected wholly the works of the bards in my publications. Oſſian acted in a more extenſive ſphere, and his ideas ought to be more noble and univerſal; neither gives he, I preſume, ſo many of thoſe peculiarities which are only underſtood in a certain period or country. The other bards have their beauties, but not in this ſpecies of compoſition. Their rhimes, only calculated to kindle a martial ſpirit among the vulgar, afford very little pleaſure to genuine taſte. This obſervation only regards their poems of the heroic kind; in every inferior ſpecies of poetry they are more ſucceſsful. They expreſs the tender melancholy of deſponding love,

with simplicity and nature. So well adapted are the sounds of the words to the sentiments, that, even without any knowledge of the language, they pierce and dissolve the heart. Successful love is expressed with peculiar tenderness and elegance. In all their compositions, except the heroic, which was solely calculated to animate the vulgar, they gave us the genuine language of the heart, without any of those affected ornaments of phraseology, which, though intended to beautify sentiments, divest them of their natural force. The ideas, it is confessed, are too local, to be admired, in another language; to those who are acquainted with the manners they represent, and the scenes they describe, they must afford pleasure and satisfaction.

It was the locality of their description and sentiment, that, probably, has kept them hitherto in the obscurity of an almost lost language. The ideas of an unpolished period are so contrary to the present advanced state of society, that more than a common mediocrity of taste is required, to relish them as they deserve. Those who alone are capable of transferring ancient poetry into a modern language, might be better employed in giving originals of their own, were it not for that wretched envy and meanness which effects to despise cotemporary genius. My first publication was merely accidental. Had I then met with less approbation, my after-pursuits would

would have been more profitable; at leaſt I might have continued to be ſtupid, without being branded with dulneſs.

Theſe poems may furniſh light to antiquaries, as well as ſome pleaſure to the lovers of poetry. The firſt population of Ireland, its firſt kings, and ſeveral circumſtances, which regard its connection of old with the ſouth and north of Britain, are preſented in ſeveral epiſodes. The ſubject and cataſtrophe of the poem are founded upon facts, which regarded the firſt peopling of that country, and the conteſts between the two Britiſh nations, who originally inhabited that iſland. In a preceding part of this Diſſertation, I have ſhewn how ſuperior the probability of this ſyſtem is to the undigeſted fictions of the Iriſh bards, and the more recent and regular legends of both Iriſh and Scottiſh hiſtorians. I mean not to give offence to the abettors of the high antiquities of the two nations, though I have all along expreſſed my doubts concerning the veracity and abilities of thoſe who deliver down their ancient hiſtory. For my own part, I prefer the national fame, ariſing from a few certain facts, to the legendary and uncertain annals of ages of remote and obſcure antiquity. No kingdom now eſtabliſhed in Europe can pretend to equal antiquity with that of the Scots, inconſiderable, as it may appear in other reſpects, even according to my ſyſtem, ſo that it is altogether needleſs to fix its origin a fictitious millennium before.

Since

Since the firſt publication of theſe poems, many inſinuations have been made, and doubts ariſen, concerning their authenticity. Whether theſe ſuſpicions are ſuggeſted by prejudice, or are only the effects of malice, I neither know nor care. Thoſe who have doubted my veracity, have paid a compliment to my genius; and were even the allegation true, my ſelf-denial might have atoned for my fault. Without vanity I ſay it, I think I could write tolerable poetry; and I aſſure my antagoniſts, that I ſhould not tranſlate what I could not imitate.

As prejudice is the effect of ignorance, I am not ſurprized at its being general. An age that produces few marks of genius ought to be ſparing of admiration. The truth is, the bulk of mankind have ever been led, by reputation more than taſte, in articles of literature. If all the Romans, who admired Virgil, underſtood his beauties, he would have ſcarce deſerved to have come down to us, through ſo many centuries. Unleſs genius were in faſhion, Homer himſelf might have written in vain. He that wiſhes to come with weight, on the ſuperficial, muſt ſkim the ſurface, in their own ſhallow way. Were my aim to gain the many, I would write a madigral ſooner than an heroic poem. Laberius himſelf would be always ſure of more followers than Sophocles.

Some, who doubt the authenticity of this work, with peculiar acuteneſs appropriate them to the Iriſh nation. Though it is not eaſy to conceive

conceive how theſe poems can belong to Ireland and to me, at once, I ſhall examine the ſubject, without further animadverſion on the blunder.

Of all the nations deſcended from the ancient *Celtæ*, the Scots and Iriſh are the moſt ſimilar in language, cuſtoms, and manners. This argues a more intimate connection between them, than a remote deſcent from the great Celtic ſtock. It is evident, in ſhort, that at ſome one period or other, they formed one ſociety, were ſubject to the ſame government, and were, in all reſpects, one and the ſame people. How they became divided, which the colony, or which the mother nation, I have in another work amply diſcuſſed. The firſt circumſtance that induced me to diſregard the vulgarly-received opinion of the Hibernian extraction of the Scottiſh nation, was my obſervations on their ancient language. That dialect of the Celtic tongue, ſpoken in the north of Scotland, is much more pure, more agreeable to its mother language, and more abounding with primitives, than that now ſpoken, or even that which has been written for ſome centuries back, amongſt the moſt unmixed part of the Iriſh nation. A Scotchman, tolerably converſant in his own language, underſtands an Iriſh compoſition, from that derivative analogy which it has to the *Galic* of North Britain. An Iriſhman, on the other hand, without the aid of ſtudy, can never underſtand a compoſition in the *Galic* tongue.

This affords a proof, that the *Scotch Galic* is the moſt original, and, conſequently, the language of a more ancient and unmixed people. The Iriſh, however backward they may be to allow any thing to the prejudice of their antiquity, ſeem inadvertently to acknowledge it, by the very appellation they give to the dialect they ſpeak. They call their own language *Caëlic, Eirinarch*, i. e. *Caledonian Iriſh*, when, on the contrary, they call the dialect of North Britain *a Chaëlic*, or the *Caledonian tongue*, emphatically. A circumſtance of this nature tends more to decide which is the moſt ancient nation, than the united teſtimonies of a whole legion of ignorant bards and ſenachies, who, perhaps, never dreamed of bringing the Scots from Spain to Ireland, till ſome one of them, more learned than the reſt, diſcovered, that the Romans called the firſt *Iberia*, and the latter *Hibernia*. On ſuch a ſlight foundation were probably built the romantic fictions, concerning the Mileſians of Ireland.

From internal proofs it ſufficiently appears, that the poems publiſhed under the name of Oſſian, are not of Iriſh compoſition. The favourite chimæra, that Ireland is the mother country of the Scots, is totally ſubverted and ruined. The fictions concerning the antiquities of that country, which were forming for ages, and growing as they came down, on the hands of ſucceſſive *ſenachies* and *fileas*, are found, at laſt, to be the ſpurious brood of

of modern and ignorant ages. To those who know how tenacious the Irish are of their pretended *Iberian* descent, this alone is proof sufficient, that poems, so subversive of their system, could never be produced by an Hibernian bard. But when we look to the language, it is so different from the Irish dialect, that it would be as ridiculous to think, that Milton's Paradise Lost could be wrote by a Scottish peasant, as to suppose, that the poems ascribed to Ossian were writ in Ireland.

The pretensions of Ireland to Ossian proceed from another quarter. There are handed down, in that country, traditional poems, concerning the *Fiona*, or the heroes of *Fion Mac Commal*. This *Fion*, say the Irish annalists, was general of the militia of Ireland, in the reign of Cormac, in the third century. Where Keating and O'Flaherty learned, that Ireland had an *embodied* militia so early, is not easy for me to determine. Their information certainly did not come from the Irish poems concerning *Fion*. I have just now, in my hands, all that remain of those compositions; but, unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland, they appear to be the work of a very modern period. Every stanza, nay almost every line, affords striking proofs, that they cannot be three centuries old. Their allusions to the manners and customs of the fifteenth century, are so many, that it is matter of wonder to me, how any one could dream of their antiquity. They are entirely writ

writ in that romantic taſte, which prevailed two ages ago. Giants, enchanted caſtles, dwarfs, palfreys, witches and magicians, form the whole circle of the poet's invention. The celebrated *Fion* could ſcarcely move from one hillock to another, without encountering a giant, or being entangled in the circles of a magician. Witches, on broomſticks, were continually hovering round him, like crows; and he had freed enchanted virgins in every valley in Ireland. In ſhort, *Fion*, great as he was, paſſed a diſagreeable life. Not only had he to engage all the miſchiefs in his own country, foreign armies invaded him, aſſiſted by magicians and witches, and headed by kings, as tall as the main-maſt of a firſt rate. It muſt be owned, however, that *Fion* was not inferior to them in height.

A chos air *Cromleach*, druim-ard,
Chos eile air Crom-meal dubh,
Thoga *Fion* le lamh mhoir
An d'uiſge o *Lubbair* na fruth.

With one foot on *Cromleach* his brow,
The other on *Crommal* the dark,
Fion took up with his large hand
The water from *Lubar* of the ſtreams.

Cromleach and *Crommal* were two mountains in the neighbourhood of one another, in Ulſter, and the river *Lubar* ran through the intermediate valley. The property of ſuch a monſter as this *Fion*, I ſhould never have diſputed with any nation. But the bard himſelf,

ſelf, in the poem from which the above quotation is taken, cedes him to Scotland.

> FION O ALBIN, ſiol nan laoich!
> FION *from* ALBION, *race of heroes!*

Were it allowable to contradict the authority of a bard, at this diſtance of time, I ſhould have given as my opinion, that this enormous *Fion* was of the race of the Hibernian giants, of Ruanus, or ſome other celebrated name, rather than a native of Caledonia, whoſe inhabitants, now at leaſt, are not remarkable for their ſtature. As for the poetry, I leave it to the reader.

If *Fion* was ſo remarkable for his ſtature, his heroes had alſo other extraordinary properties. *In weight all the ſons of ſtrangers* yielded to the celebrated Ton-ioſal; and for hardneſs of ſkull, and, perhaps, for thickneſs too, the valiant Oſcar ſtood *unrivalled and alone*. Oſſian himſelf had many ſingular and leſs delicate qualifications, than playing on the harp; and the brave Cuthullin was of ſo diminutive a ſize, as to be taken for a child of two years of age, by the gigantic Swaran. To illuſtrate this ſubject, I ſhall here lay before the reader, the hiſtory of ſome of the Iriſh poems, concerning *Fion Mac Comnal*. A tranſlation of theſe pieces, if well executed, might afford ſatisfaction, in an uncommon way, to the Public. But this ought to be the work of a native of Ireland. To draw forth, from obſcurity, the poems of my own country, has waſted

all

all the time I had allotted for the muſes; beſides, I am too diffident of my own abilities, to undertake ſuch a work. A gentleman in Dublin accuſed me to the public, of committing blunders and abſurdities, in tranſlating the language of my own country, and that before any tranſlation of mine appeared *. How the gentleman came to ſee my blunders before I committed them, is not eaſy to determine; if he did not conclude, that, as a Scotſman, and, of courſe deſcended of the Mileſian race, I might have committed ſome of thoſe overſights, which, perhaps very unjuſtly, are ſaid to be peculiar to them.

From the whole tenor of the Iriſh poems, concerning the *Fiona*, it appears, that *Fion*

* In Faulkner's Dublin Journal, of the 1ſt December 1761, appeared the following Advertiſement: two weeks before my firſt publication appeared in London.

Speedily will be publiſhed, by a gentleman of this kingdom, who hath been, for ſome time paſt, employed in tranſlating and writing hiſtorical notes to

FINGAL, A POEM,

Originally wrote in the Iriſh or Erſe language. In the preface to which, the tranſlator, who is a perfect maſter of the Iriſh tongue, will give an account of the manners and cuſtoms of the ancient Iriſh or Scotch; and, therefore, moſt humbly intreats the public, to wait for his edition, which will appear in a ſhort time, as he will ſet forth all the blunders and abſurdities in the edition now printing in London, and ſhew the ignorance of the Engliſh tranſlator in his knowledge of Iriſh grammar, not underſtanding any part of that accidence.

Mac

Mac Comnal flouriſhed in the reign of Cormac, which is placed, by the univerſal conſent of the ſenachies, in the third century. They even fix the death of Fingal in the year 286, yet his ſon Oſſian is made cotemporary with St. Patrick, who preached the goſpel in Ireland about the middle of the fifth age. Oſſian, though, at that time, he muſt have been two hundred and fifty years of age, had a daughter young enough to become wife to the ſaint. On account of this family connection, *Patrick of the Pſalms*, for ſo the apoſtle of Ireland is emphatically called in the poems, took great delight in the company of Oſſian, and in hearing the great actions of his family. The ſaint ſometimes threw off the auſterity of his profeſſion, drunk freely, and had his ſoul properly warmed with wine, to receive with becoming enthuſiaſm, the poems of his father-in-law. One of the poems begins with this piece of uſeful information:

Lo don rabh PADRIC na mhúr,
Gun *Sailm* air uidh, ach a gól,
Ghluais é thigh *Oſſian* mhic *Fhion*,
O ſan leis bu bhinn a ghloir.

The title of this poem is *Teantach mor na Fiona*. It appears to have been founded on the ſame ſtory with the *battle of Lora*. The circumſtances and cataſtrophe in both are much the ſame; but the *Iriſh Oſſian* diſcovers the age in which he lived, by an unlucky

 anachroniſm.

anachronism. After describing the total route of Erragon, he very gravely concludes with this remarkable anecdote, that none of the foe escaped, but a few, who were permitted to go on a pilgrimage to the *Holy Land.* This circumstance fixes the date of the composition of the piece some centuries after the famous croisade; for, it is evident, that the poet thought the time of the croisade so antient, that he confounds it with the age of Fingal. Erragon, in the course of this poem, is often called,

> Riogh *Lochlin* an do shloigh,
> *King of Denmark of two nations,*

which alludes to the union of the kingdoms of Norway and Denmark, a circumstance which happened under Margaret de Waldemar, in the close of the fourteenth age. Modern, however, as this pretended Ossian was, it is certain, he lived before the Irish had dreamed of appropriating *Fion*, or *Fingal*, to themselves. He concludes the poem, with this reflection:

> Na fagha se comhthròm nan n' arm,
> Erragon Mac Annir nan lànn glas
> San n' ALBIN ni n' abairtair Triath
> Agus ghlaoite an n' *Fhiona* as.

"Had Erragon, son of Annir of gleaming swords, avoided the equal contest of arms, (single combat,) no chief should have afterwards been numbered in ALBION, and the heroes of Fion should no more be named."

The

The next poem that falls under our obſervation is *Cath-cabhra*, or, *The death of Oſcar*. This piece is founded on the ſame ſtory which we have in the firſt book of Temora. So little thought the author of *Cath-cabhra* of making Oſcar his country-man, that, in the courſe of two hundred lines, of which the poems conſiſt, he puts the following expreſſion thrice in the mouth of the hero:

> ALBIN an ſa d' roina m' arach.——
> ALBION *where I was born and bred.*

The poem contains almoſt all the incidents in the firſt book of Temora. In one circumſtance the bard differs materially from Oſſian. Oſcar, after he was mortally wounded by Cairbar, was carried by his people to a neighbouring hill, which commanded a proſpect of the ſea. A fleet appeared at a diſtance, and the hero exclaims with joy,

> Loingeas mo ſhean-athair at' ſan
> 'S iad a tiachd le cabhair chugain,
> O ALBIN na n' ioma ſtuagh.

"It is the fleet of my grandfather, coming with aid to our field, from ALBION of many waves!"——The teſtimony of this bard is ſufficient to confute the idle fictions of Keating and O'Flaherty; for, though he is far from being ancient, it is probable, he flouriſhed a full century before theſe hiſtorians. He appears, however, to have been a much better Chriſtian than Chronologer; for *Fion*, though

though he is placed two centuries before St. Patrick, very devoutly recommends the ſoul of his grandſon to his Redeemer.

Duan a Gharibh Mac-Starn is another Iriſh poem in high repute. The grandeur of its images, and its propriety of ſentiment, might have induced me to give a tranſlation of it, had not I ſome expectations, which are now over, of ſeeing it in the collection of the Iriſh Oſſian's poems, promiſed twelve years ſince to the public. The author deſcends ſometimes from the region of the ſublime to low and indecent deſcription; the laſt of which, the Iriſh tranſlator, no doubt, will chooſe to leave in the obſcurity of the original. In this piece Cuthullin is uſed with very little ceremony, for he is oft called the *dog of Tara*, in the county of Meath. This ſevere title of the *redoubtable Cuthullin*, the moſt renowned of Iriſh champions, proceeded from the poet's ignorance of etymology. Cu, *voice*, or commander, ſignifies alſo a *dog*. The poet choſe the laſt, as the moſt noble appellation for his hero.

The ſubject of the poem is the ſame with that of the epic poem of Fingal. *Caribh Mac-Starn* is the ſame with Oſſian's Swaran, the ſon of Starno. His ſingle combats with, and his victory over all the heroes of Ireland, excepting the *celebrated dog of Tara*, i. e. Cuthullin, afford matter for two hundred lines of tolerable poetry. *Caribh*'s progreſs in ſearch of Cuthullin, and his intrigue with the gigantic

gigantic Emir-bragal, that hero's wife, enables the poet to extend his piece to four hundred lines. This author, it is true, makes Cuthullin a native of Ireland; the gigantic Emir-bragal he calls *the guiding ſtar of the women of Ireland.* The property of this enormous lady I ſhall not diſpute with him, or any other. But, as he ſpeaks with great tenderneſs of the *daughters of the convent*, and throws out ſome hints againſt the Engliſh nation, it is probable he lived in too modern a period to be intimately acquainted with the genealogy of Cuthullin.

Another Iriſh Oſſian, for there were many, as appears from their difference in language and ſentiment, ſpeaks very dogmatically of *Fion Mac Comnal*, as an Iriſhman. Little can be ſaid for the judgment of this poet, and leſs for his delicacy of ſentiment. The hiſtory of one of his epiſodes may, at once, ſtand as a ſpecimen of his want of both. Ireland, in the days of *Fion*, happened to be threatened with an invaſion, by three great potentates, the kings of Lochlin, Sweden, and France. It is needleſs to inſiſt upon the impropriety of a French invaſion of Ireland; it is ſufficient for me to be faithful to the language of my author. *Fion*, upon receiving intelligence of the intended invaſion, ſent Ca-olt, Oſſian, and Oſcar, to watch the bay, in which it was apprehended the enemy was to land. Oſcar was the worſt choice of a ſcout

that could be made, for, brave as he was, he had the bad property of falling very often asleep on his post, nor was it possible to awake him, without cutting off one of his fingers, or dashing a large stone against his head. When the enemy appeared, Oscar, very unfortunately, was asleep. Ossian and Ca-olt consulted about the method of wakening him, and they, at last, fixed on the stone, as the less dangerous expedient.

> Gun thog Caoilte a chlach, nach gàn,
> Agus a n' aighai' chiean gun bhuail;
> Tri mil an tulloch gun chri', &c.

"Ca-olt took up a heavy stone, and struck it against the hero's head. The hill shook for three miles, as the stone rebounded and rolled away." Oscar rose in wrath, and his father gravely desired him to spend his rage on his enemies, which he did to so good purpose, that he singly routed a whole wing of their army. The confederate kings advanced, notwithstanding, till they came to a narrow pass, possessed by the celebrated Ton-iosal. This name is very significant of the singular property of the hero who bore it. Ton-iosal, though brave, was so heavy and unweildy, that when he sat down, it took the whole force of an hundred men to set him upright on his feet again. Luckily for the preservation of Ireland, the hero happened to be standing when the enemy appeared, and he gave so good an

account of them, that *Fion*, upon his arrival, found little to do, but to divide the ſpoil among his ſoldiers.

All theſe extraordinay heroes, Fion, Oſſian, Oſcar, and Ca-olt, ſays the poet, were

Siol ERIN na gorm lánn.
The ſons of ERIN *of blue ſteel.*

Neither ſhall I much diſpute the matter with him: he has my conſent alſo to appropriate to Ireland the celebrated Ton-ioſal. I ſhall only ſay, that they are different perſons from thoſe of the ſame name, in the Scotch poems; and that, though the ſtupendous valour of the firſt is ſo remarkable, they have not been equally lucky with the latter, in their poet. It is ſomewhat extraordinary, that *Fion*, who lived ſome ages before St. Patrick, ſwears like a very good Chriſtian:

Air an Dia do chum gach *caſe*.
By God, who ſhaped every caſe.

It is worthy of being remarked, that, in the line quoted, Oſſian, who lived in St. Patrick's days, ſeems to have underſtood ſomething of the Engliſh, a language not then ſubſiſting. A perſon, more ſanguine for the honour of his country than I am, might argue from this circumſtance, that this pretendedly Iriſh Oſſian was a native of Scotland; for my countrymen are univerſally allowed to have an excluſive right to the ſecond-ſight.

From the instances given, the reader may form a complete idea of the Irish compositions concerning the *Fiona*. The greatest part of them make the heroes of *Fion*,

> Siol ALBIN a n'nioma caoile.
> *The race of* ALBION *of many firths.*

The rest make them natives of Ireland. But, the truth is, that their authority is of little consequence on either side. From the instances I have given, they appear to have been the work of a very modern period. The pious ejaculations they contain, their allusions to the manners of the times, fix them to the fifteenth century. Had even the authors of these pieces avoided all allusions to their own times, it is impossible that the poems could pass for ancient, in the eyes of any person tolerably conversant with the Irish tongue. The idiom is so corrupted, and so many words borrowed from the English, that the language must have made considerable progress in Ireland before the poems were written.

It remains now to shew, how the Irish bards begun to appropriate the Scottish Ossian and his heroes to their own country. After the English conquest, many of the natives of Ireland, averse to a foreign yoke, either actually were in a state of hostility with the conquerors, or, at least, paid little regard to the government. The Scots, in those ages, were often in open war, and never in cordial friendship with the English. The similarity of manners

and

and language, the traditions concerning their common origin, and above all, their having to do with the ſame enemy, created a free and friendly intercourſe between the Scottiſh and Iriſh nations. As the cuſtom of retaining bards and ſenachies was common to both; ſo each, no doubt, had formed a ſyſtem of hiſtory, it matters not how much ſoever fabulous, concerning their reſpective origin. It was the natural policy of the times, to reconcile the traditions of both nations together, and, if poſſible, to reduce them from the ſame original ſtock.

The Saxon manners and language had, at that time, made great progreſs in the ſouth of Scotland. The ancient language, and the traditional hiſtory of the nation, became confined entirely to the inhabitants of the Highlands, then fallen, from ſeveral concurring circumſtances, into the laſt degree of ignorance and barbariſm. The Iriſh, who, for ſome ages before the conqueſt, had poſſeſſed a competent ſhare of that kind of learning, which then prevailed in Europe, found it no difficult matter to impoſe their own fictions on the ignorant Highland ſenachies. By flattering the vanity of the Highlanders, with their long liſt of Heremonian kings and heroes, they, without contradiction, aſſumed to themſelves the character of being the mother-nation of the Scots of Britain. At this time, certainly, was eſtabliſhed that Hibernian ſyſtem of the original of the Scots which afterwards, for want of any other, was univerſally received. The

Scots

Scots of the low-country, who, by losing the language of their ancestors, lost, together with it, their national traditions, received, implicitly, the history of their country, from Irish refugees, or from Highland senachies, persuaded over into the Hibernian system.

These circumstances are far from being ideal. We have remaining many particular traditions, which bear testimony to a fact, of itself abundantly probable. What makes the matter incontestible is, that the ancient traditional accounts of the genuine origin of the Scots, have been handed down without interruption. Though a few ignorant senachies might be persuaded out of their own opinion, by the smoothness of an Irish tale, it was impossible to eradicate, from among the bulk of the people, their own national traditions. These traditions afterwards so much prevailed, that the Highlanders continue totally unacquainted with the pretended Hibernian extract of the Scotch nation. Ignorant chronicle writers, strangers to the ancient language of their country, preserved only from falling to the ground so improbable a story.

This subject, perhaps, is pursued further than it deserves; but a discussion of the pretensions of Ireland, was become in some measure necessary. If the Irish poems, concerning the *Fiona*, should appear ridiculous, it is but justice to observe, that they are scarcely more so than the poems of other nations, at that period. On other subjects, the bards of Ireland

land have diſplayed a genius for poetry. It was, alone, in matters of antiquity, that they were monſtrous in their fables. Their love-ſonnets, and, their elegies on the death of perſons worthy or renowned, abound with ſimplicity, and a wild hármony of numbers. They become more than an atonement for their errors, in every other ſpecies of poetry. But the beauty of theſe ſpecies, depends ſo much on a certain *curioſo felicitas* of expreſſion in the original, that they muſt appear much to diſadvantage in another language.

A CRITICAL DISSERTATION ON THE POEMS OF OSSIAN, THE SON OF FINGAL.

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AMONG the monuments remaining of the ancient ſtate of nations, few are more valuable than their poems or ſongs. Hiſtory, when it treats of remote and dark ages, is ſeldom very inſtructive. The beginnings of ſociety, in every country, are involved in fabulous confuſion; and though they were not, they would furniſh few events worth recording. But, in every period of ſociety, human manners are a curious ſpectacle; and the moſt natural pictures of ancient manners are exhibited in the ancient poems of nations. Theſe preſent to us, what is much more valuable than the hiſtory of ſuch tranſactions as a rude age can afford, The hiſtory of human imagination and paſſion. They make us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow-creatures

creatures in the moſt artleſs ages; diſcovering what objects they admired, and what pleaſures they purſued, before thoſe refinements of ſociety had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diverſify the tranſactions, but diſguiſe the manners of mankind.

Beſides this merit, which ancient poems have with philoſophical obſervers of human nature, they have another with perſons of taſte. They promiſe ſome of the higheſt beauties of poetical writing. Irregular and unpoliſhed we may expect the productions of uncultivated ages to be; but abounding, at the ſame time, with that enthuſiaſm, that vehemence and fire, which are the ſoul of poetry: for many circumſtances of thoſe times which we call barbarous, are favourable to the poetical ſpirit. That ſtate, in which human nature ſhoots wild and free, though unfit for other improvements, certainly encourages the high exertions of fancy and paſſion.

In the infancy of ſocieties, men live ſcattered and diſperſed, in the midſt of ſolitary rural ſcenes, where the beauties of nature are their chief entertainment. They meet with many objects, to them new and ſtrange; their wonder and ſurprize are frequently excited; and by the ſudden changes of fortune occurring in their unſettled ſtate of life, their paſſions are raiſed to the utmoſt, their paſſions have nothing to reſtrain them: their imagination has nothing to check it. They diſplay themſelves

to one another without diſguiſe; and converſe and act in the uncovered ſimplicity of nature. As their feelings are ſtrong, ſo their language, of itſelf, aſſumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they deſcribe every thing in the ſtrongeſt colours; which of courſe renders their ſpeech pictureſque and figurative. Figurative languages owes its riſe chiefly to two cauſes; to the want of proper names for objects, and to the influence of imagination and paſſion over the form of expreſſion. Both theſe cauſes concur in the infancy of ſociety. Figures are commonly conſidered as artificial modes of ſpeech, deviſed by orators and poets, after the world had advanced to a refined ſtate. The contrary of this is the truth. Men never have uſed ſo many figures of ſtyle, as in thoſe rude ages, when, beſides the power of a warm imagination to ſuggeſt lively images, the want of proper and preciſe terms for the ideas they would expreſs, obliged them to have recourſe to circumlocution, metaphor, compariſon, and all thoſe ſubſtituted forms of expreſſion, which give a poetical air to language. An American chief, at this day, harangues at the head of his tribe, in a more bold and metaphorical ſtyle, than a modern European would adventure to uſe in an Epic poem.

In the progreſs of ſociety, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy than to ſprightlineſs and ſublimity. As the world advances, the

underſtanding gains ground upon the imagination; the underſtanding is more exerciſed; the imagination, leſs. Fewer objects occur that are new or ſurprizing. Men apply themſelves to trace the cauſes of things; they correct and refine one another; they ſubdue or diſguiſe their paſſions; they form their exterior manners upon one uniform ſtandard of politeneſs and civility. Human nature is pruned according to method and rule. Language advances from ſterility to copiouſneſs, and at the ſame time, from fervour and enthuſiaſm, to correctneſs and preciſion. Style becomes more chaſte; but leſs animated. The progreſs of the world in this reſpect reſembles the progreſs of age in man. The powers of imagination are moſt vigorous and predominant in youth; thoſe of the underſtanding ripen more ſlowly, and often attain not to their maturity, till the imagination begins to flag. Hence, poetry, which is the child of imagination, is frequently moſt glowing and animated in the firſt ages of ſociety. As the ideas of our youth are remembered with a peculiar pleaſure on account of their livelineſs and vivacity; ſo the moſt ancient poems have often proved the greateſt favourites of nations.

Poetry has been ſaid to be more ancient than proſe: and however paradoxical ſuch an aſſertion may ſeem, yet, in a qualified ſenſe, it is true. Men certainly never converſed with one another in regular numbers; but even their ordinary language would in ancient times,

times, for the reaſons before aſſigned, approach to a poetical ſtyle; and the firſt compoſitions tranſmitted to poſterity, beyond doubt, were, in a literal ſenſe, poems; that is, compoſitions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into ſome kind of numbers, and pronounced with a muſical modulation or tone. Muſic or ſong has been found coæval with ſociety among the moſt barbarous nations. The only ſubjects which could prompt men, in their firſt rude ſtate, to utter their thoughts in compoſitions of any length, were ſuch as naturally aſſumed the tone of poetry; praiſes of their gods, or of their anceſtors; commemorations of their own warlike exploits; or lamentations over their misfortunes. And before writing was invented, no other compoſitions, except ſongs or poems, could take ſuch hold of the imagination and memory, as to be preſerved by oral tradition, and handed down from one race to another.

Hence we may expect to find poems among the antiquities of all nations. It is probable too, that an extenſive ſearch would diſcover a certain degree of reſemblance among all the moſt ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded. In a ſimilar ſtate of manners, ſimilar objects and paſſions operating upon the imaginations of men, will ſtamp their productions with the ſame general character. Some diverſity will, no doubt, be occaſioned by climate and genius. But mankind never bear ſuch reſembling fea-

tures, as they do in the beginnings of ſociety. Its ſubſequent revolutions give riſe to the principal diſtinctions among nations; and divert, into channels widely ſeparated, that current of human genius and manners, which deſcends originally from one ſpring. What we have been long accuſtomed to call the oriental vein of poetry, becauſe ſome of the earlieſt poetical productions have come to us from the Eaſt, is probably no more oriental than occidental; it is characteriſtical of an age rather than a country; and belongs, in ſome meaſure, to all nations at a certain period. Of this the works of Oſſian ſeem to furniſh a remarkable proof.

Our preſent ſubject leads us to inveſtigate the ancient poetical remains, not ſo much of the eaſt, or of the Greeks and Romans, as of the northern nations; in order to diſcover whether the Gothic poetry has any reſemblance to the Celtic or Galic, which we are about to conſider. Though the Goths, under which name we uſually comprehend all the Scandinavian tribes, were a people altogether fierce and martial, and noted, to a proverb, for their ignorance of the liberal arts, yet they too, from the earlieſt times, had their poets and their ſongs. Their poets were diſtinguiſhed by the title of *Scalders*, and their ſongs were termed *Vyſes* *. Saxo Grammaticus, a Daniſh

* Olaus Wormius, in the appendix to his Treatiſe de Literatura Runica, has given a particular account of the Gothic

a Daniſh hiſtorian of conſiderable note who flouriſhed in the thirteenth century, informs us that very many of theſe ſongs, containing the

Gothic poetry, commonly called Runic, from *Runes*, which ſignifies the Gothic letters. He informs us that there were no fewer than 136 different kinds of meaſure, or verſe, uſed in their *Vyſes*; and though we are accuſtomed to call rhyme a Gothic invention, he ſays expreſsly, that among all theſe meaſures, rhyme, or correſpondence of final ſyllables, was never employed. He analyſes the ſtructure of one of theſe kinds of verſe, that in which the poem of Lodbrog, afterwards quoted, is written; which exhibits a very ſingular ſpecies of harmony, if it can be allowed that name, depending neither upon rhyme nor upon metrical feet, or quantity of ſyllables, but chiefly upon the number of the ſyllables, and the diſpoſition of the letters. In every ſtanza was an equal number of lines: in every line ſix ſyllables. In each diſtich, it was requiſite that three words ſhould begin with the ſame letter; two of the correſponding words placed in the firſt line of the diſtich, the third, in the ſecond line. In each line were alſo required two ſyllables, but never the final ones, formed either of the ſame conſonants, or ſame vowels. As an example of this meaſure, Olaus gives us theſe two Latin lines conſtructed exactly according to the above rules of Runic verſe:

Chriſtus caput noſtrum
Coronet te bonis.

The initial letters of Chriſtus, Caput, and Coronet, make the three correſponding letters of the diſtich. In the firſt line, the firſt ſyllables of Chriſtus and of noſtrum; in the ſecond line, the *on* in coronet and in bonis make the requiſite correſpondence of ſyllables. Frequent inverſions and tranſpoſitions were permitted in this poetry; which would naturally follow from ſuch laborious attention to the collocation of words.

 The

the ancient traditionary ſtories of the country, were found engraven upon rocks in the old Runic character, ſeveral of which he has tranſlated into Latin, and inſerted into his Hiſtory. But his verſions are plainly ſo paraphraſtical, and forced into ſuch an imitation of the ſtyle and the meaſures of the Roman poets, that one can form no judgment from them of the native ſpirit of the original. A more curious monument of the true Gothic poetry is preſerved by Olaus Wormius in his book de Literatura Runica. It is an Epicedium, or funeral ſong, compoſed by Regner Lodbrog; and tranſlated by Olaus, word for word from the original. This Lodbrog was a king of Denmark, who lived in the eighth century, famous for his wars and victories; and at the ſame time an eminent *Scalder* or poet. It was his misfortune to fall at laſt into the hands of one of his enemies, by whom he was thrown into priſon, and condemned to be deſtroyed by ſerpents. In this ſituation he ſolaced himſelf with rehearſing all the exploits

The curious in this ſubject may conſult likewiſe Dr. Hicks's Theſaurus Linguarum Septentrionalium; particularly the 23d chapter of his Grammatica Anglo Saxonica & Mæſo-Gothica; where they will find a full account of the ſtructure of the Anglo Saxon verſe, which nearly reſembled the Gothic. They will find alſo ſome ſpecimens both of Gothic and Saxon poetry. An extract, which Dr. Hicks has given from the work of one of the Daniſh Scalders, entitled Hervarer Saga, containing an evocation from the dead, may be found in the 6th volume of Miſcellany Poems, publiſhed by Mr. Dryden.

of his life. The poem is divided into twenty-nine ſtanzas, of ten lines each; and every ſtanza begins with theſe words, Pugnavimus enſibus, We have fought with our ſwords. Olaus's verſion is in many places ſo obſcure as to be hardly intelligible. I have ſubjoined the whole below, exactly as he has publiſhed it; and ſhall tranſlate as much as may give the Engliſh reader an idea of the ſpirit and ſtrain of this kind of poetry*.

"We

* 1.
Pugnavimus enſibus
Haud poſt longum tempus
Cum in Gotlandia acceſſimus
Ad ſerpentis immenſi necem
Tunc impetravimus Thoram
Ex hoc vocarunt me virum
Quod ſerpentem transfodi
Hirſutam braccam ob illam cedem
Cuſpide ictum intuli in colubrum
Fero lucidorum ſtupendiorum.

2.
Multum juvenis fui quando acquiſivimus
Orientem verſus in Oreonico freto
Vulnerum amnes avidæ feræ
Et flavipedi avi
Accepimus ibidem ſonuerunt
Ad ſublimes galeas
Dura ferra magnam eſcam
Omnis erat oceanus vulnus
Vadavit corvus in ſanguine Cæſorum.

3.
Alte tulimus tunc lanceas
Quando viginti annos numeravimus
Et celebrem laudem comparavimus paſſim
Vicimus octo barones

In

"We have fought with our ſwords. I was "young, when, towards the eaſt, in the bay "of Oreon, we made torrents of blood flow, "to

In oriente ante Dimini portum
Aquilæ impetravimus tunc ſufficientem
Hoſpitii ſumptum in illa ſtrage
Sudor decidit in vulnerum
Oceano perdidit exercitus ætatem.

4.

Pugnæ facta copia
Cum Helſingianos poſtulavimus
Ad aulum Odini
Naves direximus in oſtium Viſtulæ
Mucro potuit tum mordere
Omnis erat vulnus unda
Terra rubefacta Calido
Frendebat gladius in loricas
Gladius findebat Clypeos.

5.

Memini neminem tunc fugiſſe
Priuſquam in navibus
Heraudus in bello caderet
Non findit navibus
Alius baro præſtantior
Mare ad portum
In navibus longis poſt illum
Sic attulit princeps paſſim
Alacre in bellum cor.

6.

Exercitus abjecit clypeos
Cum haſta volavit
Ardua ad virorum pectora
Momordit Scarforum cautes
Gladius in pugna
Sanguineus erat Clypeus

Antequam

"to gorge the ravenous beaſt of prey, and "the yellow-footed bird. There reſounded "the hard ſteel upon the lofty helmets of "men,

Antequam Rafno rex caderet
Fluxit ex virorum capitibus
Calidus in loricas ſudor.

7.

Habere potuerunt tum corvi
Ante Indirorum inſulas
Sufficientem prædam dilaniandam
Acquiſivimus feris carnivoris
Plenum prandium unico actu
Difficile erat unius facere mentionem
Oriente ſole
Spicula vidi pungere
Propulerunt arcus ex ſe ferra.

8.

Altum mugierunt enſes
Antequam in Laneo campo
Eiſlinus rex cecidit
Proceſſimus auro ditati
Ad terram proſtratorum dimicandum
Gladius ſecuit Clypeorum
Picturas in galearum conventu
Cervicum muſtum ex vulneribus
Diffuſum per cerebrum fiſſum.

9.

Tenuimus Clypeos in ſanguine
Cum haſtam unximus
Ante Boring holmum
Telorum nubes diſrumpunt clypeum
Extruſit arcus ex ſe metallum
Volnir cecidit in conflictu
Non erat illo rex major
Cœſi diſperſi late per littora
Feræ amplectebantur eſcam.

Pugna

"men. The whole ocean was one wound.
"The crow waded in the blood of the ſlain.
"When we had numbered twenty years, we
"lifted

10.

Pugna manifeſte creſcebat
Antequam Freyr rex caderet
In Flandorum terra
Cæpit cæruleus ad incidendum
Sanguine illitus in auream
Loricam in pugna
Durus armorum mucro olim
Virgo deploravit matutinam lanienam
Multa præda dabatur feris.

11.

Centies centenos vidi jacere
In navibus
Ubi Ænglanes vocatur
Navigavimus ad pugnam
Per ſex dies antequam exercitus caderet
Tranſegimus mucronum miſſam
In exortu ſolis
Coactus eſt pro noſtris gladiis
Valdioſur in bello occumbere.

12.

Ruit pluvia ſanguinis de gladiis
Præceps in Bardafyrde
Pallidum corpus pro accipitribus
Murmuravit arcus ubi mucro
Acriter mordebat Loricas
In conflictu
Odini Pileus Galea
Cucurrit arcus ad vulnus
Venenate acutus conſperſus ſudore ſanguineo.

13.

Tenuimus magica ſcuta
Alte in pugnæ ludo

Ante

" lifted our ſpears on high, and every where " ſpread our renown. Eight barons we over-" came in the eaſt, before the port of Dimi-" num

Ante Hiadningum ſinum
Videre licuit tum viros
Qui gladiis lacerarunt Clypeos
In gladiatorio murmure
Galeæ attritæ virorum
Erat ſicut ſplendidam virginem
In lecto juxta ſe collocare.

14.

Dura venit tempeſtas Clypeis
Cadaver cecidit in terram
In Nortumbria
Erat circa matutinum tempus
Hominibus neceſſum erat fugere
Ex prælio ubi acute
Caſſidis campos mordebant gladii
Erat hoc veluti Juvenem viduam
In primaria ſede oſculari.

15.

Herthioſe evaſit fortunatus
In Auſtralibus Orcadibus ipſe
Victoriæ in noſtris hominibus
Cogebatur in armorum nimbo
Rogvaldus occumbere
Iſte venit ſummus ſuper accipitres
Luctus in gladiorum ludo
Strenue jactabat concuſſor
Galeæ ſanguinis teli.

16.

Quilibet jacebat tranſverſim ſupra alium
Guadebat pugna lætus
Accipiter ob gladiorum ludum
Non fecit aquilam aut aprum

Qui

" num; and plentifully we feasted the eagle
" in that slaughter. The warm stream of
" wounds ran into the ocean. The army
" fell

Qui Irlandiam gubernavit
Conventus fiebat ferri & Clypei
Marstanus rex jejunis
Fiebat in vedræ sinu
Præda data corvis.

17.

Bellatorem multum vidi cadere
Mane ante machæram
Virum in mucronum dissidio
Filio meo incidit mature
Gladius juxta cor
Egillus fecit Agnerum spoliatum.
Impertertitum virum vita
Sonuit lancea prope Hamdi
Griseam loricam splendebant vexilla.

18.

Verborum tenaces vidi dissecare
Haut minutim pro lupis
Endili maris ensibus
Erat per Hebdomadæ spacium
Quasi mulieres vinum apportarent
Rubefactæ erant naves
Valde in strepitu armorum
Scissa erat lorica
In Scioldungorum prælio.

19.

Pulchricomum vidi crepusculascere
Virginis amatorem circa matutinum
Et confabulationis amicum viduarum
Erat sicut calidum balneum
Vinei vasis nympha portaret
Nos in Ilæ freto
Antiquam Orn rex caderet

Sanguineum

" fell before us. When we ſteered our ſhips
" into the mouth of the Viſtula, we ſent the
" Helſingians to the Hall of Odin. Then
" did

Sanguineum Clypeum vidi ruptum
Hoc invertit virorum vitam.

20.

Egimus gladiorum ad cædem
Ludum in Lindis inſula
Cum regibus tribus
Pauci potuerunt inde lætari
Cecidit multus in rictum ferarum
Accipiter dilaniavit carnem cum lupo
Ut ſatur inde diſcederet
Hybernorum ſanguis in oceanum
Copioſe decidit per mactationis tempus.

21.

Alte gladius mordebat Clypeos
Tunc cum aurei coloris
Haſta fricabat loricas
Videre licuit in Onlugs inſula
Per ſecula multum poſt
Ibi fuit ad gladiorum ludos
Reges proceſſerunt
Rubicundum erat circa inſulam
Ar volans Draco vulnerum.

22.

Quid eſt viro forti morte certius
Etſi ipſe in armorum nimbo
Adverſus collocatus ſit
Sæpe deplorat ætatem
Qui nunquam premitur
Malum ferunt timidum incitare
Aquilam ad gladiorum ludum
Meticuloſus venit nuſpiam
Cordi ſuo uſui.

" did the ſword bite. The waters were all " one wound. The earth was dyed red with " the warm ſtream. The ſword rung upon " the

23.

Hoc numero æquum ut procedat
In contactu gladiorum
Juvenis unus contra alterum
Non retrocedat vir a viro
Hoc fuit viri fortis nobilitas diu
Semper debet amoris amicus virginum
Aucax eſſe in fremitu armorum.

24.

Hoc videtur mihi re vera
Quod fata ſequimur
Rarus tranſgreditur fata Parcarum
Non deſtinavi Ellæ
De vitæ exitu meæ
Cum ego ſanguinem ſemimortuus tegerem
Et naves in aquas protruſi
Paſſim impetravimus tum feris
Eſcam in Scotiæ ſinubus.

25.

Hoc ridere me facit ſemper
Quod Balderi patris ſcamna
Parata ſcio in aula
Bibemus cerevīſiam brevi
Ex concavis crateribus craniorum
Non gemit vir fortis contra mortem
Magnifici in Odini domibus
Non venio deſperabundis
Verbis ad Odini aulam

26.

Hic vellent nunc omnes
Filii Aſlaugæ gladiis
Amarum bellum excitare

Si

" the coats of mail, and clove the bucklers in " twain. None fled on that day, till among

---

Si exacte fcirent
Calamitates noftras
Quem non pauci angues
Venenati me difcerpunt
Matrem accepi meis
Filiis ita ut corda valeant.

27.

Valde inclinatur ad hæreditatem
Crudele ftat nocumentum a vipera
Anguis inhabitat aulam cordis
Speramus alterius ad Othini
Virgam in Ellæ fanguine
Filiis meis livefcet
Sua ira rubefcet
Non acres juvenes
Seffionem tranquillam facient.

28.

Habeo quinquagies
Prælia fub fignis facta
Ex belli invitatione & femel
Minime putavi hominum
Quod me futurus effet
Juvenis didici mucronem rubefacere
Alius rex præftantior
Nos Afæ invitabunt
Non eft lugenda mors.

29.

Fert animus finire
Invitant me Dyfæ
Quas ex Othini aula
Othinus mihi mifit
Lætus cerevifiam cum Afis
In fumma fede bibam
Vitæ elapfæ funt horæ
Ridens moriar.

" his

" his ſhips Heraudus fell. Than him no " braver baron cleaves the ſea with ſhips; a " cheerful heart did he ever bring to the " combat. Then the hoſt threw away their " ſhields, when the uplifted ſpear flew at the " breaſts of heroes. The ſword bit the Scar- " fian rocks; bloody was the ſhield in battle, " until Rafno the king was ſlain. From the " heads of warriors the warm ſweat ſtreamed " down their armour. The crows around " the Indirian iſlands had an ample prey. It " were difficult to ſingle out one among ſo " many deaths. At the riſing of the ſun I " beheld the ſpears piercing the bodies of " foes, and the bows throwing forth their " ſteel-pointed arrows. Loud roared the " ſwords in the plains of Lano.—The virgin " long bewailed the ſlaughter of that morn- " ing."—In this ſtrain the poet continues to deſcribe ſeveral other military exploits. The images are not much varied: the noiſe of arms, the ſtreaming of blood, and the feaſt- ing the birds of prey, often recurring. He mentions the death of two of his ſons in bat- tle; and the lamentation he deſcribes as made for one of them is very ſingular. A Grecian or Roman poet would have introduced the virgins or nymphs of the wood, bewailing the untimely fall of a young hero. But, ſays our Gothic poet, " When Rogvaldus was ſlain, " for him mourned all the hawks of heaven," as lamenting a benefactor who had ſo libe- rally ſupplied them with prey; " for boldly,"

as

as he adds, "in the strife of swords, did "the breaker of helmets throw the spear of "blood."

The poem concludes with sentiments of the highest bravery and contempt of death. "What is more certain to the brave man than "death, though amidst the storm of swords, "he stands always ready to oppose it? He only "regrets this life who hath never known dis-"tress. The timorous man allures the de-"vouring eagle to the field of battle. The "coward, wherever he comes, is useless to "himself. This I esteem honourable, that "the youth should advance to the combat "fairly matched one against another; nor "man retreat from man. Long was this the "warrior's highest glory. He who aspires to "the love of virgins, ought always to be "foremost in the roar of arms. It appears to "me of truth, that we are led by the Fates. "Seldom can any overcome the appointment "of destiny. Little did I foresee that Ella* "was to have my life in his hands, in that "day when fainting I concealed my blood, "and pushed forth my ships into the waves; "after we had spread a repast for the beasts "of prey throughout the Scottish bays. But "this makes me always rejoice that in the "halls of our father Balder [or Odin] I know "there are seats prepared, where, in a short "time, we shall be drinking ale out of the

* This was the name of his enemy who had condemned him to death.

" hollow ſkulls of our enemies. In the houſe
" of the mighty Odin, no brave man laments
" death. I come not with the voice of deſpair
" to Odin's hall. How eagerly would all the
" ſons of Aſlauga now ruſh to war, did they
" know the diſtreſs of their father, whom a
" multitude of venomous ſerpents tear! I have
" given to my children a mother who hath
" filled their hearts with valour. I am faſt
" approaching to my end. A cruel death
" awaits me from the viper's bite. A ſnake
" dwells in the midſt of my heart. I hope
" that the ſword of ſome of my ſons ſhall yet
" be ſtained with the blood of Ella. The
" valiant youths will wax red with anger, and
" will not ſit in peace. Fifty and one times
" have I reared the ſtandard in battle. In
" my youth I learned to dye the ſword in
" blood: my hope was then, that no king
" among men would be more renowned than
" me. The goddeſſes of death will now ſoon
" call me; I muſt not mourn my death. Now
" I end my ſong. The goddeſſes invite me
" away; they whom Odin has ſent to me
" from his hall. I will ſit upon a lofty ſeat,
" and drink ale joyfully with the goddeſſes of
" death. The hours of my life are run out.
" I will ſmile when I die."

This is ſuch poetry as we might expect from a barbarous nation. It breathes a moſt ferocious ſpirit. It is wild, harſh, and irregular; but at the ſame time animated and ſtrong; the ſtyle, in the original, full of inverſions, and,

as

as we learn from ſome of Olaus's notes, highly metaphorical and figured.

But when we open the works of Oſſian, a very different ſcene preſents itſelf. There we find the fire and the enthuſiaſm of the moſt early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art. We find tenderneſs, and even delicacy of ſentiment, greatly predominant over fierceneſs and barbarity. Our hearts are melted with the ſofteſt feelings, and at the ſame time elevated with the higheſt ideas of magnanimity, generoſity, and true heroiſm. When we turn from the poetry of Lodbrog to that of Oſſian, it is like paſſing from a ſavage deſert, into a fertile and cultivated country. How is this to be accounted for? Or by what means to be reconciled with the remote antiquity attributed to theſe poems? This is a curious point; and requires to be illuſtrated.

That the ancient Scots were of Celtic original, is paſt all doubt. Their conformity with the Celtic nations in language, manners, and religion, proves it to a full demonſtration. The Celtæ, a great and mighty people, altogether diſtinct from the Goths and Teutones, once extended their dominion over all the weſt of Europe; but ſeem to have had their moſt full and complete eſtabliſhment in Gaul. Wherever the Celtæ or Gauls are mentioned by ancient writers, we ſeldom fail to hear of their Druids and their Bards; the inſtitution of which two orders, was the capital diſtinc-

tion of their manners and policy. The Druids were their philoſophers and prieſts; the Bards, their poets and recorders of heroic actions: and both theſe orders of men ſeem to have ſubſiſted among them, as chief members of the ſtate, from time immemorial *. We muſt not therefore imagine the Celtæ to have been altogether a groſs and rude nation. They poſſeſſed from very remote ages a formed ſyſtem of diſcipline and manners, which appears to have had a deep and laſting influence. Ammianus Marcellinus gives them this expreſs teſtimony, that there flouriſhed among them the ſtudy of the moſt laudable arts; introduced by the Bards, whoſe office it was to ſing in heroic verſe the gallant actions of illuſtrious men; and by the Druids, who lived together in colleges or ſocieties, after the Pythagorean manner, and philoſophizing upon the higheſt ſubjects, aſſerted the immortality of the human ſoul †. Though Julius Cæſar, in

* Τρία φῦλα τῶν τιμωμενών διαφερόντως ἐςι. Βαρδοι τε ϗ̀ ὐατεις, ϗ̀ Δρῦιδαι. Βαρδοι μεν ὑμνηταὶ ϗ̀ ποιηταὶ. Strabo. lib. iv.

Ε'ισι παρ' ἄυτοῖς ϗ̀ ποιηταὶ μελῶν, ὓς Βαρδȣς ονομαζȣσιν. ὗτοι δε μετ' οργάνων, ταῖς λυραις ομοιων, ὓς μεν ὕμνȣσι, ὓς δε βλασφημȣσι. Diodor. Sicul. l. 5.

Τα δε ἀκȣσματα ἀυτῶν εισιν οἱ καλȣ́μενοι βαρδοι, ποιηταὶ δ' ὗτοι τυγχανȣσι μετ' ὠδης ἐπαινȣ́ς λεγοντες. Poſidonius ap. Athenæum, l. 6.

† Per hæc loca (ſpeaking of Gaul) hominibus paulatim excultis *viguere ſtudia laudabilium doctrinarum;* inchoata per Bardos & Euhages & Druidas. Et Bardi quidem fortia virorum illuſtrium facta heroicis compoſita verſibus cum

in his account of Gaul, does not expreſsly mention the Bards, yet it is plain, that under the title of Druids, he comprehends that whole college or order; of which the Bards, who, it is probable, were the diſciples of the Druids, undoubtedly made a part. It deſerves remark, that, according to his account, the Druidical inſtitution firſt took riſe in Britain, and paſſed from thence into Gaul; ſo that they who aſpired to be thorough maſters of that learning were wont to reſort to Britain. He adds too, that ſuch as were to be initiated among the Druids, were obliged to commit to their memory a great number of verſes, inſomuch that ſome employed twenty years in this courſe of education; and that they did not think it lawful to record theſe poems in writing, but ſacredly handed them down by tradition from race to race*.

So ſtrong was the attachment of the Celtic nations to their poetry and their bards, that, amidſt all the changes of their government and manners, even long after the order of the Druids was extinct, and the national religion altered, the bards continued to flouriſh; not

cum dulcibus lyræ modulis cantitârunt. Euhages vero ſcrutantes ſerium & ſublimia naturæ pandere conabantur. Inter hos, Druidæ ingeniis celſiores, ut auctoritas Pythagoræ decrevit, ſodalitiis adſtricti conſortiis, quæſtionibus altarum occultarumque rerum erecti ſunt; & deſpanctes humana pronuntiârunt animas immortales. Amm. Marcellinus, l. 15. c. 9.

* Vid. Cæſar de Bello Gall. lib. 6.

as a ſet of ſtrolling ſongſters, like the Greek Ἀοιδοὶ or Rhapſodiſts, in Homer's time, but as an order of men highly reſpected in the ſtate, and ſupported by a public eſtabliſhment. We find them, according to the teſtimonies of Strabo and Diodorus, before the age of Auguſtus Cæſar; and we find them remaining under the ſame name, and exerciſing the ſame functions as of old, in Ireland, and in the north of Scotland, almoſt down to our own times. It is well known that in both theſe countries, every *Regulus* or chief had his own bard, who was conſidered as an officer of rank in his court; and had lands aſſigned him, which deſcended to his family. Of the honour in which the bards were held, many inſtances occur in Oſſian's poems. On all important occaſions, they were the ambaſſadors between contending chiefs; and their perſons were held ſacred. "Cairbar feared to ſtretch his "ſword to the bards, though his ſoul was "dark. Looſe the bards, ſaid his brother "Cathmor, they are the ſons of other times. "Their voice ſhall be heard in other ages, "when the kings of Temora have failed."

From all this, the Celtic tribes clearly appear to have been addicted in ſo high a degree to poetry, and to have made it ſo much their ſtudy from the earlieſt times, as may remove our wonder at meeting with a vein of higher poetical refinement among them, than was at firſt ſight to have been expected among nations, whom we are accuſtomed to call barbarous,

barous. Barbarity, I muſt obſerve, is a very equivocal term; it admits of many different forms and degrees; and though, in all of them, it excludes poliſhed manners, it is, however, not inconſiſtent with generous ſentiments and tender affections *. What degrees of friendſhip, love, and heroiſm, may poſſibly be found to prevail in a rude ſtate of

* Surely among the wild Laplanders, if any where, barbarity is in its moſt perfect ſtate. Yet their love-ſongs, which Scheffer has given us in his Lapponia, are a proof that natural tenderneſs of ſentiment may be found in a country, into which the leaſt glimmering of ſcience has never penetrated. To moſt Engliſh readers theſe ſongs are well known by the elegant tranſlations of them in the Spectator, No. 366 and 400. I ſhall ſubjoin Scheffer's Latin verſion of one of them, which has the appearance of being ſtrictly literal.

Sol, clariſſimum emitte lumen in paludem Orra. Si eniſus in ſumma picearum cacumina ſcirem me viſurum Orra paludem, in ea eniterer, ut viderem inter quos amica, mea eſſet flores; omnes ſuſcinderem frutices ibi enatos, omnes ramos præſecarem, hos virentes ramos. Curſum nubium eſſem ſecutus, quæ iter ſuum inſtituunt verſus paludem Orra, ſi ad te volare poſſem alis, cornicum alis. Sed mihi deſunt alæ, alæ querquedulæ, pedeſque, anſerum pedes plantæve bonæ, quæ deferre me valeant ad te. Satis expectâſti diu; per tot dies, tot dies tuos optimos, oculis tuis jucundiſſimis, corde tuo amiciſſimo. Quod ſi longiſſimè velles effugere, cito tamen te conſequerer. Quid firmius validiuſve eſſe poteſt quam contorti nervi, catenæve ferreæ, quæ duriſſimè ligant? Sic amor contorquet caput noſtrum, mutat cogitationes & ſententias. Puerorum voluntas, voluntas venti; juvenum cogitationes, longæ cogitationes. Quos ſi audirem omnes, a via, a via juſta declinarem. Unum eſt conſilium quod capiam; ita ſcio viam rectiorem me reperturum. Schefferi Lapponia, cap. 25.

ſociety, no one can ſay. Aſtoniſhing inſtances of them we know, from hiſtory, have ſometimes appeared: and a few characters diſtinguiſhed by thoſe high qualities, might lay a foundation for a ſet of manners being introduced into the ſongs of the bards, more refined, it is probable, and exalted, according to the uſual poetical licence, than the real manners of the country. In particular, with reſpect to heroiſm; the great employment of the Celtic bards, was to delineate the characters, and ſing the praiſes of heroes. So Lucan;

> Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos,
> Laudibus in longum vates diffunditis ævum
> Plurima ſecuri fudiſtis carmina bardi.
>
> *Pharſ.* l. 1.

Now when we conſider a college or order of men, who cultivating poetry throughout a long ſeries of ages, had their imaginations continually employed on the ideas of heroiſm; who had all the poems and panegyrics which were compoſed by their predeceſſors, handed down to them with care; who rivalled and endeavoured to out-ſtrip thoſe who had gone before them, each in the celebration of his particular hero; is it not natural to think, that at length the character of a hero would appear in their ſongs with the higheſt luſtre, and be adorned with qualities truly noble? Some of the qualities indeed which diſtinguiſh a Fingal, moderation, humanity, and clemency, would

would not probably be the firſt ideas of heroiſm occurring to a barbarous people: but no ſooner had ſuch ideas begun to dawn on the minds of poets, than, as the human mind eaſily opens to the native repreſentations of human perfection, they would be ſeized and embraced; they would enter into their panegyrics; they would afford materials for ſucceeding bards to work upon and improve; they would contribute not a little to exalt the public manners. For ſuch ſongs as theſe, familiar to the Celtic warriors from their childhood, and throughout their whole life, both in war and in peace, their principal entertainment muſt have had a very conſiderable influence in propagating among them real manners nearly approaching to the poetical; and in forming even ſuch a hero as Fingal. Eſpecially when we conſider that among their limited objects of ambition, among the few advantages which, in a ſavage ſtate, man could obtain over man, the chief was Fame, and that immortality which they expected to receive from their virtues and exploits, in the ſongs of bards *.

Having made theſe remarks on the Celtic poetry and bards in general, I ſhall next conſider

* When Edward I. conquered Wales, he put to death all the Welch bards. This cruel policy plainly ſhews, how great an influence he imagined the ſongs of theſe bards to have over the minds of the people; and of what nature he judged that influence to be. The Welch bards were of the ſame Celtic race with the Scottiſh and Iriſh.

ſider the particular advantages which Oſſian poſſeſſed. He appears clearly to have lived in a period which enjoyed all the benefit I juſt now mentioned of traditionary poetry. The exploits of Trathal, Trenmor, and the other anceſtors of Fingal, are ſpoken of as familiarly known. Ancient bards are frequently alluded to. In one remarkable paſſage, Oſſian deſcribes himſelf as living in a ſort of claſſical age, enlightened by the memorials of former times, which were conveyed in the ſongs of bards; and points at a period of darkneſs and ignorance which lay beyond the reach of tradition. "His words," ſays he, "came only by halves to our ears; they "were dark as the tales of other times, be-"fore the light of the ſong aroſe." Oſſian, himſelf, appears to have been endowed by nature with an exquiſite ſenſibility of heart; prone to that tender melancholy which is ſo often an attendant on great genius; and ſuſceptible equally of ſtrong and of ſoft emotions. He was not only a profeſſed bard, educated with care, as we may eaſily believe, to all the poetical art then known, and connected, as he ſhews us himſelf, in intimate friendſhip with the other contemporary bards, but a warrior alſo; and the ſon of the moſt renowned hero and prince of his age. This formed a conjunction of circumſtances uncommonly favourable towards exalting the imagination of a poet. He relates expeditions in which he had been engaged; he ſings of

of battles in which he had fought and overcome; he had beheld the moſt illuſtrious ſcenes which that age could exhibit, both of heroiſm in war, and magnificence in peace. For, however rude the magnificence of thoſe times may ſeem to us, we muſt remember that all ideas of magnificence are comparative; and that the age of Fingal was an æra of diſtinguiſhed ſplendour in that part of the world. Fingal reigned over a conſiderable territory; he was enriched with the ſpoils of the Roman province; he was ennobled by his victories and great actions; and was in all reſpects a perſonage of much higher dignity than any of the chieftains, or heads of Clans, who lived in the ſame country, after a more extenſive monarchy was eſtabliſhed.

The manners of Oſſian's age, ſo far as we can gather them from his writings, were abundantly favourable to a poetical genius. The two diſpiriting vices, to which Longinus imputes the decline of poetry, covetouſneſs and effeminacy, were as yet unknown. The cares of men were few. They lived a roving indolent life; hunting and war their principal employments; and their chief amuſements, the muſic of bards and "the feaſt of "ſhells." The great object purſued by heroic ſpirits, was "to receive their fame;" that is, to become worthy of being celebrated in the ſongs of bards; and "to have their name on "the four grey ſtones." To die unlamented by a bard, was deemed ſo great a misfortune

as even to disturb their ghosts in another state. "They wander in thick mists beside "the reedy lake; but never shall they rise, "without the song, to the dwelling of winds." After death, they expected to follow employments of the same nature with those which had amused them on earth; to fly with their friends on clouds, to pursue airy deer, and to listen to their praise in the mouths of bards. In such times as these, in a country where poetry had been so long cultivated, and so highly honoured, is it any wonder that among the race and succession of bards, one Homer should arise; a man, who, endowed with a natural happy genius, favoured by peculiar advantages of birth and condition, and meeting, in the course of his life, with a variety of incidents proper to fire his imagination, and to touch his heart, should attain a degree of eminence in poetry, worthy to draw the admiration of more refined ages?

The compositions of Ossian are so strongly marked with characters of antiquity, that although there were no external proof to support that antiquity, hardly any reader of judgment and taste could hesitate in referring them to a very remote æra. There are four great stages through which men successively pass in the progress of society. The first and earliest is the life of hunters; pasturage succeeds to this, as the ideas of property begin to take root; next agriculture; and lastly, commerce. Throughout Ossian's poems, we

plainly

plainly find ourſelves in the firſt of theſe periods of ſociety; during which, hunting was the chief employment of men, and the principal method of their procuring ſubſiſtence. Paſturage was not indeed wholly unknown; for we hear of dividing the herd in the caſe of a divorce; but the alluſions to herds and to cattle are not many; and of agriculture we find no traces. No cities appear to have been built in the territories of Fingal. No arts are mentioned except that of navigation and of working in iron *. Every thing pre-

* Their ſkill in navigation need not at all ſurprize us. Living in the weſtern iſlands, along the coaſt, or in a country which is every where interſected with arms of the ſea, one of the firſt objects of their attention, from the earlieſt time, muſt have been how to traverſe the waters. Hence that knowledge of the ſtars, ſo neceſſary for guiding them by night, of which we find ſeveral traces in Oſſian's works; particularly in the beautiful deſcription of Cathmor's ſhield, in the 7th book of Temora. Among all the northern maritime nations, navigation was very early ſtudied. Piratical incurſions were the chief means they employed for acquiring booty; and were among the firſt exploits which diſtinguiſhed them in the world. Even the ſavage Americans were, at their firſt diſcovery, found to poſſeſs the moſt ſurprizing ſkill and dexterity in navigating their immenſe lakes and rivers.

The deſcription of Cuthullin's chariot, in the 1ſt book of Fingal, has been objected to by ſome, as repreſenting greater magnificence than is conſiſtent with the ſuppoſed poverty of that age. But this chariot is plainly only a horſe-litter; and the gems mentioned in the deſcription are no other than the ſhining ſtones or pebbles, known to be frequently found along the weſtern coaſt of Scotland.

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ſents to us the moſt ſimple and unimproved manners. At their feaſts, the heroes prepared their own repaſt; they ſat round the light of the burning oak; the wind lifted their locks, and whiſtled through their open halls. Whatever was beyond the neceſſaries of life was known to them only as the ſpoil of the Roman province; "the gold of the ſtranger; "the lights of the ſtranger; the ſteeds of the "ſtranger, the children of the rein."

This repreſentation of Oſſian's times, muſt ſtrike us the more, as genuine and authentic, when it is compared with a poem of later date, which Mr. Macpherſon has preſerved in one of his notes. It is that wherein five bards are repreſented as paſſing the evening in the houſe of a chief, and each of them ſeparately giving his deſcription of the night. The night ſcenery is beautiful; and the author has plainly imitated the ſtyle and manner of Oſſian: but he has allowed ſome images to appear which betray a later period of ſociety. For we meet with windows clapping, the herds of goats and cows ſeeking ſhelter, the ſhepherd wandering, corn on the plain, and the wakeful hind rebuilding the ſhocks of corn which had been overturned by the tempeſt. Whereas, in Oſſian's works, from beginning to end, all is conſiſtent; no modern alluſion drops from him; but every where, the ſame face of rude nature appears; a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled. The graſs of

the rock, the flower of the heath, the thiſtle with its beard, are the chief ornaments of his landſcapes. "The deſert," ſays Fingal, is "enough for me, with all its woods and "deer."

The circle of ideas and tranſactions is no wider than ſuits ſuch an age; nor any greater diverſity introduced into characters, than the events of that period would naturally diſplay. Valour and bodily ſtrength are the admired qualities. Contentions ariſe, as is uſual among ſavage nations, from the ſlighteſt cauſes. To be affronted at a tournament, or to be omitted in the invitation to a feaſt, kindles a war. Women are often carried away by force; and the whole tribe, as in the Homeric times, riſe to avenge the wrong. The heroes ſhew refinement of ſentiment indeed on ſeveral occaſions, but none of manners. They ſpeak of their paſt actions with freedom, boaſt of their exploits, and ſing their own praiſe. In their battles, it is evident that drums, trumpets, or bagpipes, were not known or uſed. They had no expedient for giving the military alarms but ſtriking a ſhield, or raiſing a loud cry: and hence the loud and terrible voice of Fingal is often mentioned as a neceſſary qualification of a great general; like the βοὴν ἀγαθος Μενελαος of Homer. Of military diſcipline or ſkill, they appear to have been entirely deſtitute. Their armies ſeem not to have been numerous; their battles were diſorderly; and terminated,

minated, for the moſt part, by a perſonal combat, or wreſtling of the two chiefs; after which, "the bard ſung the ſong of peace, "and the battle ceaſed along the field."

The manner of compoſition bears all the marks of the greateſt antiquity. No artful tranſitions; nor full and extended connection of parts; ſuch as we find among the poets of later times, when order and regularity of compoſition were more ſtudied and known; but a ſtyle always rapid and vehement; in narration conciſe even to abruptneſs, and leaving ſeveral circumſtances to be ſupplied by the reader's imagination. The language has all that figurative caſt, which, as I before ſhewed, partly a glowing and undiſciplined imagination, partly the ſterility of language and the want of proper terms, have always introduced into the early ſpeech of nations; and, in ſeveral reſpects, it carries a remarkable reſemblance to the ſtyle of the Old Teſtament. It deſerves particular notice, as one of the moſt genuine and deciſive characters of antiquity, that very few general terms, or abſtract ideas, are to be met with in the whole collection of Oſſian's works. The ideas of men, at firſt, were all particular. They had not words to expreſs general conceptions. Theſe were the conſequence of more profound reflection, and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of ſpeech. Oſſian, accordingly, almoſt never expreſſes himſelf in the abſtract. His ideas extended little

farther than to the objects he ſaw around him. A public, a community, the univerſe, were conceptions beyond his ſphere. Even a mountain, a ſea, or a lake, which he has occaſion to mention, though only in a ſimile, are for the moſt part particularized; it is the hill of Cromla, the ſtorm of the ſea of Malmor, or the reeds of the lake of Lego. A mode of expreſſion, which, whilſt it is characteriſtical of ancient ages, is at the ſame time highly favourable to deſcriptive poetry. For the ſame reaſons, perſonification is a poetical figure not very common with Oſſian. Inanimate objects, ſuch as winds, trees, flowers, he ſometimes perſonifies with great beauty. But the perſonifications which are ſo familiar to later poets of Fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the reſt of that claſs, were unknown to our Celtic bard. Theſe were modes of conception too abſtract for his age.

All theſe are marks ſo undoubted, and ſome of them too ſo nice and delicate, of the moſt early times, as put the high antiquity of theſe poems out of queſtion. Eſpecially when we conſider, that if there had been any impoſture in this caſe, it muſt have been contrived and executed in the Highlands of Scotland, two or three centuries ago; as up to this period, both by manuſcripts, and by the teſtimony of a multitude of living witneſſes, concerning the uncontrovertible tradition of theſe poems, they can clearly be traced. Now this is a period when that country enjoyed no advantages for

a compoſition of this kind, which it may not be ſuppoſed to have enjoyed in as great, if not in a greater degree, a thouſand years before. To ſuppoſe that two or three hundred years ago, when we well know the Highlands to have been in a ſtate of groſs ignorance and barbarity, there ſhould have ariſen in that country a poet, of ſuch exquiſite genius, and of ſuch deep knowledge of mankind, and of hiſtory, as to diveſt himſelf of the ideas and manners of his own age, and to give us a juſt and natural picture of a ſtate of ſociety ancienter by a thouſand years; one who could ſupport this counterfeited antiquity through ſuch a large collection of poems, without the leaſt inconſiſtency; and who, poſſeſſed of all this genius and art, had at the ſame time the ſelf-denial of concealing himſelf, and of aſcribing his own works to an antiquated bard, without the impoſture being detected; is a ſuppoſition that tranſcends all bounds of credibility.

There are, beſides, two other circumſtances to be attended to, ſtill of greater weight, if poſſible, againſt this hypotheſis. One is, the total abſence of religious ideas from this work; for which the tranſlator has, in his preface, given a very probable account, on the footing of its being the work of Oſſian. The druidical ſuperſtition was, in the days of Oſſian, on the point of its final extinction; and for particular reaſons, odious to the family of Fingal; whilſt the Chriſtian faith was not yet eſta-

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bliſhed. But had it been the work of one to whom the ideas of Chriſtianity were familiar from his infancy; and who had ſuperadded to them alſo the bigoted ſuperſtition of a dark age and country; it is impoſſible but in ſome paſſage or other, the traces of them would have appeared. The other circumſtance is, the entire ſilence which reigns with reſpect to all the great clans or families which are now eſtabliſhed in the Highlands. The origin of theſe ſeveral clans is known to be very ancient: and it is as well known that there is no paſſion by which a native Highlander is more diſtinguiſhed than by attachment to his clan, and jealouſy for its honour. That a Highland bard in forging a work relating to the antiquities of his country, ſhould have inſerted no circumſtance which pointed out the riſe of his own clan, which aſcertained its antiquity, or increaſed its glory, is, of all ſuppoſitions that can be formed, the moſt improbable; and the ſilence on this head, amounts to a demonſtration that the author lived before any of the preſent great clans were formed or known.

Aſſuming it then, as we well may, for certain, that the poems, now under conſideration, are genuine venerable monuments of very remote antiquity; I proceed to make ſome remarks upon their general ſpirit and ſtrain. The two great characteriſtics of Oſſian's poetry are, tenderneſs and ſublimity. It breathes nothing of the gay and cheerful kind; an air of ſolemnity and ſeriouſneſs is diffuſed over the

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whole. Oſſian is perhaps the only poet who never relaxes, or lets himſelf down into the light and amuſing ſtrain; which I readily admit to be no ſmall diſadvantage to him, with the bulk of readers. He moves perpetually in the high region of the grand and the pathetic. One key note is ſtruck at the beginning, and ſupported to the end; nor is any ornament introduced, but what is perfectly concordant with the general tone or melody. The events recorded, are all ſerious and grave; the ſcenery throughout, wild and romantic. The extended heath by the ſea ſhore; the mountain ſhaded with miſt; the torrent ruſhing through a ſolitary valley; the ſcattered oaks, and the tombs of warriors overgrown with moſs; all produce a ſolemn attention in the mind, and prepare it for great and extraordinary events. We find not in Oſſian, an imagination that ſports itſelf, and dreſſes out gay trifles to pleaſe the fancy. His poetry, more perhaps than that of any other writer, deſerves to be ſtyled, *The Poetry of the Heart.* It is a heart penetrated with noble ſentiments, and with ſublime and tender paſſions; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itſelf forth. Oſſian did not write, like modern poets, to pleaſe readers and critics. He ſung from the love of poetry and ſong. His delight was to think of the heroes among whom he had flouriſhed; to recal the affecting incidents of his life; to dwell upon his paſt wars, and loves, and friendſhips; till, as he expreſſes

it

it himſelf, " there comes a voice to Oſſian and " awakes his ſoul. It is the voice of years " that are gone; they roll before me with all " their deeds;" and under this true poetic inſpiration, giving vent to his genius, no wonder we ſhould ſo often hear, and acknowledge in his ſtrains, the powerful and ever-pleaſing voice of nature.

> Arte, natura potentior omni.—
> Eſt Deus in nobis, agitante caleſcimus illo.

It is neceſſary here to obſerve, that the beauties of Oſſian's writings cannot be felt by thoſe who have given them only a ſingle or a haſty peruſal. His manner is ſo different from that of the poets, to whom we are moſt accuſtomed; his ſtyle is ſo conciſe, and ſo much crowded with imagery; the mind is kept at ſuch a ſtretch in accompanying the author; that an ordinary reader is at firſt apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleaſed. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it is impoſſible but his beauties muſt open to every reader who is capable of ſenſibility. Thoſe who have the higheſt degree of it, will reliſh them the moſt.

As Homer is, of all the great poets, the one whoſe manner, and whoſe times, come the neareſt to Oſſian's, we are naturally led to run a parallel in ſome inſtances between the Greek and the Celtic bard. For though Homer lived more than a thouſand years before

 Oſſian,

Oſſian, it is not from the age of the world, but from the ſtate of ſociety, that we are to judge of reſembling times. The Greek has, in ſeveral points, a manifeſt ſuperiority. He introduces a greater variety of incidents; he poſſeſſes a larger compaſs of ideas; has more diverſity in his characters; and a much deeper knowledge of human nature. It was not to be expected, that in any of theſe particulars, Oſſian could equal Homer. For Homer lived in a country where ſociety was much farther advanced; he had beheld many more objects; cities built and flouriſhing; laws inſtituted; order, diſcipline, and arts, begun. His field of obſervation was much larger and more ſplendid; his knowledge, of courſe, more extenſive; his mind alſo, it ſhall be granted, more penetrating. But if Oſſian's ideas and objects be leſs diverſified than thoſe of Homer, they are all, however, of the kind fitteſt for poetry: the bravery and generoſity of heroes, the tenderneſs of lovers, the attachments of friends, parents, and children. In a rude age and country, though the events that happen be few, the undiſſipated mind broods over them more; they ſtrike the imagination, and fire the paſſions in a higher degree; and of conſequence become happier materials to a poetical genius, than the ſame events when ſcattered through the wide circle of more varied action, and cultivated life.

Homer is a more cheerful and ſprightly poet than Oſſian. You diſcern in him all the

Greek

Greek vivacity; whereas Oſſian uniformly maintains the gravity and ſolemnity of a Celtic hero. This too is in a great meaſure to be accounted for from the different ſituations in which they lived, partly perſonal, and partly national. Oſſian had ſurvived all his friends, and was diſpoſed to melancholy by the incidents of his life. But beſides this, cheerfulneſs is one of the many bleſſings which we owe to formed ſociety. The ſolitary wild ſtate is always a ſerious one. Bating the ſudden and violent burſts of mirth, which ſometimes break forth at their dances and feaſts, the ſavage American tribes have been noted by all travellers for their gravity and taciturnity. Somewhat of this taciturnity may be alſo remarked in Oſſian. On all occaſions he is frugal of his words; and never gives you more of an image or a deſcription than is juſt ſufficient to place it before you in one clear point of view. It is a blaze of lightning, which flaſhes and vaniſhes. Homer is more extended in his deſcriptions; and fills them up with a greater variety of circumſtances. Both the poets are dramatic; that is, they introduce their perſonages frequently ſpeaking before us. But Oſſian is conciſe and rapid in his ſpeeches, as he is in every other thing. Homer, with the Greek vivacity, had alſo ſome portion of the Greek loquacity. His ſpeeches indeed are highly characteriſtical; and to them we are much indebted for that admirable diſplay he has given of human na-

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ture. Yet if he be tedious any where, it is in theſe; ſome of them are trifling; and ſome of them plainly unſeaſonable. Both poets are eminently ſublime; but a difference may be remarked in the ſpecies of their ſublimity. Homer's ſublimity is accompanied with more impetuoſity and ſire; Oſſian's with more of a ſolemn and awful grandeur. Homer hurries you along; Oſſian elevates, and ſixes you in aſtoniſhment. Homer is moſt ſublime in actions and battles; Oſſian, in deſcription and ſentiment. In the pathetic, Homer, when he chuſes to exert it, has great power; but Oſſian exerts that power much oftener, and has the character of tenderneſs far more deeply imprinted on his works. No poet knew better how to ſeize and melt the heart. With regard to dignity of ſentiment, the pre-eminence muſt clearly be given to Oſſian. This is indeed a ſurpriſing circumſtance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity, virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic bard ſhould be diſtinguiſhed to ſuch a degree, that not only the heroes of Homer, but even thoſe of the polite and refined Virgil, are left far behind by thoſe of Oſſian.

After theſe general obſervations on the genius and ſpirit of our author, I now proceed to a nearer view and more accurate examination of his works: and as Fingal is the firſt great poem in this collection, it is proper to begin with it. To refuſe the title of an epic poem to Fingal, becauſe it is not, in every

every little particular, exactly conformable to the practice of Homer and Virgil, were the mere squeamishness and pedantry of criticism. Examined even according to Aristotle's rules, it will be found to have all the essential requisites of a true and regular epic; and to have several of them in so high a degree, as at first view to raise our astonishment on finding Ossian's composition so agreeable to rules of which he was entirely ignorant. But our astonishment will cease, when we consider from what source Aristotle drew those rules. Homer knew no more of the laws of criticism than Ossian. But guided by nature, he composed in verse a regular story, founded on heroic actions, which all posterity admired. Aristotle, with great sagacity and penetration, traced the causes of this general admiration. He observed what it was in Homer's composition, and in the conduct of his story, which gave it such power to please; from this observation he deduced the rules which poets ought to follow, who would write and please like Homer; and to a composition formed according to such rules, he gave the name of an epic poem. Hence his whole system arose. Aristotle studied nature in Homer. Homer and Ossian both wrote from nature. No wonder that among all the three, there should be such agreement and conformity.

The fundamental rules delivered by Aristotle, concerning an epic poem, are these: That the action which is the ground-work of the poem,

poem, ſhould be one, complete, and great; that it ſhould be feigned, not merely hiſtorical; that it ſhould be enlivened with characters and manners, and heightened by the marvellous.

But before entering on any of theſe, it may perhaps be aſked, what is the moral of Fingal? For, according to M. Boſſu, an epic poem is no other than an allegory contrived to illuſtrate ſome moral truth. The poet, ſays this critic, muſt begin with with fixing on ſome maxim or inſtruction which he intends to inculcate on mankind. He next forms a fable, like one of Æſop's, wholly with a view to the moral; and having thus ſettled and arranged his plan, he then looks into traditionary hiſtory for names and incidents, to give his fable ſome air of probability. Never did a more frigid, pedantic notion enter into the mind of a critic. We may ſafely pronounce, that he who ſhould compoſe an epic poem after this manner, who ſhould firſt lay down a moral and contrive a plan, before he had thought of his perſonages and actors, might deliver indeed very ſound inſtruction, but would find few readers. There cannot be the leaſt doubt that the firſt object which ſtrikes an epic poet, which fires his genius, and gives him any idea of his work, is the action or ſubject he is to celebrate. Hardly is there any tale, any ſubject a poet can chuſe for ſuch a work, but will afford ſome general moral inſtruction. An epic poem is by its nature one of the moſt moral of all poetical compoſitions; but its moral tendency

is by no means to be limited to ſome common-place maxim, which may be gathered from the ſtory. It ariſes from the admiration of heroic actions, which ſuch a compoſition is peculiarly calculated to produce; from the virtuous emotions which the characters and incidents raiſe, whilſt we read it; from the happy impreſſions which all the parts ſeparately, as well as the whole together, leave upon the mind. However, if a general moral be ſtill inſiſted on, Fingal obviouſly furniſhes one, not inferior to that of any other poet, viz. That Wiſdom and Bravery always triumph over brutal force: or another, nobler ſtill; That the moſt complete victory over an enemy is obtained by that moderation and generoſity which convert him into a friend.

The unity of the Epic action, which, of all Ariſtotle's rules, is the chief and moſt material, is ſo ſtrictly preſerved in Fingal, that it muſt be perceived by every reader. It is a more complete unity than what ariſes from relating the actions of one man, which the Greek critic juſtly cenſures as imperfect; it is the unity of one enterpriſe, the deliverance of Ireland from the invaſion of Swaran; an enterpriſe, which has ſurely the full Heroic dignity. All the incidents recorded bear a conſtant reference to one end; no double plot is carried on; but the parts unite into a regular whole: and as the action is one and great, ſo it is an entire or complete action. For we find, as the critic

farther requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; a Nodus, or intrigue in the poem; difficulties occurring through Cuthullin's rashness and bad success; those difficulties gradually surmounted; and at last the work conducted to that happy conclusion which is held essential to Epic Poetry. Unity is indeed observed with greater exactness in Fingal, than in almost any other Epic composition. For not only is unity of subject maintained, but that of time and place also. The Autumn is clearly pointed out as the season of the action; and from beginning to end the scene is never shifted from the heath of Lena, along the sea-shore. The duration of the action in Fingal, is much shorter than in the Iliad or Æneid, but sure there may be shorter as well as longer Heroic Poems; and if the authority of Aristotle be also required for this, he says expressly that the Epic composition is indefinite as to the time of its duration. Accordingly the Action of the Iliad lasts only forty-seven days, whilst that of the Æneid is continued for more than a year.

Throughout the whole of Fingal, there reigns that grandeur of sentiment, style, and imagery, which ought ever to distinguish this high species of poetry. The story is conducted with no small art. The poet goes not back to a tedious recital of the beginning of the war with Swaran; but hastening to the main action, he falls in exactly, by a most happy coincidence

coincidence of thought, with the rule of Horace.

Semper ad eventum feſtinat, & in medias res,
Non ſecus ac notas, auditorem rapit——
Nec gemino bellum Trojanum auditur ab ovo.
De Arte Poet.

He invokes no muſe, for he acknowledged none; but his occaſional addreſſes to Malvina, have a finer effect than the invocation of any muſe. He ſets out with no formal propoſition of his ſubject; but the ſubject naturally and eaſily unfolds itſelf; the poem opening in an animated manner, with the ſituation of Cuthullin, and the arrival of a ſcout who informs him of Swaran's landing. Mention is preſently made of Fingal, and of the expected aſſiſtance from the ſhips of the lonely iſle, in order to give further light to the ſubject. For the poet often ſhews his addreſs in gradually preparing us for the events he is to introduce; and in particular the preparation for the appearance of Fingal, the previous expectations, that are raiſed, and the extreme magnificence fully anſwering theſe expectations, with which the hero is at length preſented to us, are all worked up with ſuch ſkilful conduct as would do honour to any poet of the moſt refined times. Homer's art in magnifying the character of Achilles has been univerſally admired. Oſſian certainly ſhews no leſs art in aggrandizing Fingal. Nothing could be more happily imagined for this purpoſe than the whole management of the laſt battle, wherein Gaul

Gaul the ſon of Morni had beſought Fingal to retire, and to leave to him and his other chiefs the honour of the day. The generoſity of the king in agreeing to this propoſal; the majeſty with which he retreats to the hill, from whence he was to behold the engagement, attended by his bards, and waving the lightning of his ſword; his perceiving the chiefs overpowered by numbers, but from unwillingneſs to deprive them of the glory of victory by coming in perſon to their aſſiſtance, firſt ſending Ullin, the bard, to animate their courage; and at laſt, when the danger becomes more preſſing, his riſing in his might, and interpoſing, like a divinity, to decide the doubtful fate of the day; are all circumſtances contrived with ſo much art as plainly diſcover the Celtic bards to have been not unpractiſed in heroic poetry.

The ſtory which is the foundation of the Iliad is in itſelf as ſimple as that of Fingal. A quarrel ariſes between Achilles and Agamemnon concerning a female ſlave; on which Achilles, apprehending himſelf to be injured, withdraws his aſſiſtance from the reſt of the Greeks. The Greeks fall into great diſtreſs, and beſeech him to be reconciled to them. He refuſes to fight for them in perſon, but ſends his friend Patroclus; and upon his being ſlain, goes forth to revenge his death, and kills Hector. The ſubject of Fingal is this: Swaran comes to invade Ireland: Cuthullin, the guardian of the young king, had applied for aſſiſtance to Fingal, who reigned in the

the oppoſite coaſt of Scotland. But before Fingal's arrival, he is hurried by raſh counſel to encounter Swaran. He is defeated; he retreats; and deſponds. Fingal arrives in this conjuncture. The battle is for ſome time dubious; but in the end he conquers Swaran; and the remembrance of Swaran's being the brother of Agandecca, who had once ſaved his life, makes him diſmiſs him honourably. Homer, it is true, has filled up his ſtory with a much greater variety of particulars than Oſſian; and in this has ſhewn a compaſs of invention ſuperior to that of the other poet. But it muſt not be forgotten, that, though Homer be more circumſtantial, his incidents however are leſs diverſified in kind than thoſe of Oſſian. War and bloodſhed reign throughout the Iliad; and, notwithſtanding all the fertility of Homer's invention, there is ſo much uniformity in his ſubjects, that there are few readers, who, before the cloſe, are not tired with perpetual fighting. Whereas in Oſſian, the mind is relieved by a more agreeable diverſity. There is a finer mixture of war and heroiſm, with love and friendſhip, of martial with tender ſcenes, than is to be met with, perhaps, in any other poet. The Epiſodes too, have great propriety; as natural, and proper to that age and country: conſiſting of the ſongs of bards, which are known to have been the great entertainment of the Celtic heroes in war, as well as in peace. Theſe ſongs are not introduced at random; if you except

except the Epiſode of Duchom-mar and Morna, in the firſt book, which, though beautiful, is more unartful than any of the reſt; they have always ſome particular relation to the actor who is intereſted, or to the events which are going on; and, whilſt they vary the ſcene, they preſerve a ſufficient connection with the main ſubject, by the fitneſs and propriety of their introduction.

As Fingal's love to Agandecca influences ſome circumſtances of the poem, particularly the honourable diſmiſſion of Swaran at the end; it was neceſſary that we ſhould be let into this part of the hero's ſtory. But as it lay without the compaſs of the preſent action, it could be regularly introduced no where, except in an Epiſode. Accordingly the poet, with as much propriety as if Ariſtotle himſelf had directed the plan, has contrived an Epiſode for this purpoſe in the ſong of Carril, at the beginning of the third book.

The concluſion of the poem is ſtrictly according to rule; and is every way noble and pleaſing. The reconciliation of the contending heroes, the conſolation of Cuthullin, and the general felicity that crowns the action, ſooth the mind in a very agreeable manner, and form that paſſage from agitation and trouble, to perfect quiet and repoſe, which critics require as the proper termination of the Epic work. "Thus they paſſed the night "in ſong, and brought back the morning "with joy. Fingal aroſe on the heath; and

" ſhook his glittering ſpear in his hand. He
" moved firſt towards the plains of Lena; and
" we followed like a ridge of fire. Spread
" the ſail, ſaid the king of Morven, and catch
" the winds that pour from Lena. We roſe
" on the wave with ſongs; and ruſhed with
" joy through the foam of the ocean."—So much for the unity and general conduct of the Epic action in Fingal.

With regard to that property of the ſubject which Ariſtotle requires, that it ſhould be feigned, not hiſtorical, he muſt not be underſtood ſo ſtrictly as if he meant to exclude all ſubjects which have any foundation in truth. For ſuch excluſion would both be unreaſonable in itſelf, and, what is more, would be contrary to the practice of Homer, who is known to have founded his Iliad on hiſtorical facts concerning the war of Troy, which was famous throughout all Greece. Ariſtotle means no more than that it is the buſineſs of a poet not to be a mere annaliſt of facts, but to embelliſh truth with beautiful, probable, and uſeful fictions; to copy nature, as he himſelf explains it, like painters, who preſerve a likeneſs, but exhibit their objects more grand and beautiful than they are in reality. That Oſſian has followed this courſe, and, building upon true hiſtory, has ſufficiently adorned it with poetical fiction for aggrandizing his characters and facts, will not, I believe, be queſtioned by moſt readers. At the ſame time, the foundation which thoſe facts and characters had in truth, and the ſhare

which the poet himſelf had in the tranſactions which he records, muſt be conſidered as no ſmall advantage to his work. For truth makes an impreſſion on the mind far beyond any fiction; and no man, let his imagination be ever ſo ſtrong, relates any events ſo feelingly as thoſe in which he has been intereſted; paints any ſcene ſo naturally as one which he has ſeen; or draws any characters in ſuch ſtrong colours as thoſe which he has perſonally known. It is conſidered as an advantage of the Epic ſubject to be taken from a period ſo diſtant, as by being involved in the darkneſs of tradition, may give licence to fable. Though Oſſian's ſubject may at firſt view appear unfavourable in this reſpect, as being taken from his own times, yet, when we reflect that he lived to an extreme old age; that he relates what had been tranſacted in another country, at the diſtance of many years, and after all that race of men who had been the actors were gone off the ſtage; we ſhall find the objection in a great meaſure obviated. In ſo rude an age, when no written records were known, when tradition was looſe, and accuracy of any kind little attended to, what was great and heroic in one generation, eaſily ripened into the marvellous in the next.

The natural repreſentation of human characters in an Epic Poem is highly eſſential to its merit; and, in reſpect of this, there can be no doubt of Homer's excelling all the heroic poets who have ever wrote. But though Oſ-

ſian be much inferior to Homer in this article, he will be found to be equal at leaſt, if not ſuperior, to Virgil; and has indeed given all the diſplay of human nature, which the ſimple occurrences of his times could be expected to furniſh. No dead uniformity of character prevails in Fingal; but, on the contrary, the principal characters are not only clearly diſtinguiſhed, but ſometimes artfully contraſted, ſo as to illuſtrate each other. Oſſian's heroes are, like Homer's, all brave; but their bravery, like thoſe of Homer's too, is of different kinds. For inſtance, the prudent, the ſedate, the modeſt, and circumſpect Connal, is finely oppoſed to the preſumptuous, raſh, overbearing, but gallant and generous Calmar. Calmar hurries Cuthullin into action by his temerity; and when he ſees the bad effect of his counſels, he will not ſurvive the diſgrace. Connal, like another Ulyſſes, attends Cuthullin to his retreat, counſels and comforts him under his misfortune. The fierce, the proud, and high-ſpirited Swaran is admirably contraſted with the calm, the moderate, and generous Fingal. The character of Oſcar is a favourite one throughout the whole poems. The amiable warmth of the young warrior; his eager impetuoſity in the day of action; his paſſion for fame; his ſubmiſſion to his father; his tenderneſs for Malvina; are the ſtrokes of a maſterly pencil: the ſtrokes are few; but it is the hand of nature, and attracts the heart. Oſſian's own

character, the old man, the hero, and the bard, all in one, presents to us through the whole work a most respectable and venerable figure, which we always contemplate with pleasure. Cuthullin is a hero of the highest class; daring, magnanimous, and exquisitely sensible to honour. We become attached to his interest, and are deeply touched with his distress; and after the admiration raised for him in the first part of the poem, it is a strong proof of Ossian's masterly genius that he durst adventure to produce to us another hero, compared with whom, even the great Cuthullin should be only an inferior personage; and who should rise as far above him, as Cuthullin rises above the rest.

Here indeed, in the character and description of Fingal, Ossian triumphs almost unrivalled: for we may boldly defy all antiquity to shew us any hero equal to Fingal. Homer's Hector possesses several great and amiable qualities; but Hector is a secondary personage in the Iliad, not the hero of the work. We see him only occasionally; we know much less of him than we do of Fingal; who not only, in this Epic Poem, but in Temora, and throughout the rest of Ossian's works, is presented in all that variety of lights which give the full display of a character. And though Hector faithfully discharges his duty to his country, his friends, and his family, he is tinctured, however, with a degree of the same savage ferocity, which prevails among all the Homeric

Homeric heroes. For we find him insulting over the fallen Patroclus, with the most cruel taunts, and telling him, when he lies in the agony of death, that Achilles cannot help him now; and that in a short time his body, stripped naked, and deprived of funeral honours, shall be devoured by the vultures *. Whereas in the character of Fingal, concur almost all the qualities that can ennoble human nature; that can either make us admire the hero, or love the man. He is not only unconquerable in war, but he makes his people happy by his wisdom in the days of peace. He is truly the father of his people. He is known by the epithet of "Fingal of the mildest look;" and distinguished, on every occasion, by humanity and generosity. He is merciful to his foes †; full of affection to his children; full of concern about his friends; and never mentions Agandecca, his first love, without the utmost tenderness. He is the universal protector of the distressed; "None ever went sad from "Fingal."——"O Oscar! bend the strong in "arms; but spare the feeble hand. Be thou

* Iliad xvi. 830. Il. xvii. 127.

† When he commands his sons, after Swaran is taken prisoner, to "pursue the rest of Lochlin, over the heath "of Lena; that no vessel may hereafter bound on the "dark-rolling waves of Inistore;" he means not assuredly, as some have misrepresented him, to order a general slaughter of the foes, and to prevent their saving themselves by flight; but, like a wise general, he commands his chiefs to render the victory complete, by a total rout of the enemy; that they might adventure no more for the future, to fit out any fleet against him or his allies.

 "a stream

" a ſtream of many tides againſt the foes of
" thy people; but like the gale that moves
" the graſs, to thoſe who aſk thine aid. So
" Trenmor lived; ſuch Trathal was; and ſuch
" has Fingal been. My arm was the ſupport
" of the injured; the weak reſted behind the
" lightning of my ſteel." Theſe were the maxims of true heroiſm, to which he formed his grandſon. His fame is repreſented as every where ſpread; the greateſt heroes acknowledge his ſuperiority; his enemies tremble at his name; and the higheſt encomium that can be beſtowed on one whom the poet would moſt exalt, is to ſay, that his ſoul was like the ſoul of Fingal.

To do juſtice to the poet's merit, in ſupporting ſuch a character as this, I muſt obſerve, what is not commonly attended to, that there is no part of poetical execution more difficult, than to draw a perfect character in ſuch a manner, as to render it diſtinct and affecting to the mind. Some ſtrokes of human imperfection and frailty, are what uſually give us the moſt clear view, and the moſt ſenſible impreſſion of a character; becauſe they preſent to us a man, ſuch as we have ſeen; they recal known features of human nature. When poets attempt to go beyond this range, and deſcribe a faultleſs hero, they, for the moſt part, ſet before us a ſort of vague undiſtinguiſhable character, ſuch as the imagination cannot lay hold of, or realiſe to itſelf, as the object of affection. We know how much

Virgil has failed in this particular. His perfect hero, Æneas, is an unanimated insipid personage, whom we may pretend to admire, but whom no one can heartily love. But what Virgil has failed in, Ossian, to our astonishment, has successfully executed. His Fingal, though exhibited without any of the common human failings, is nevertheless a real man; a character which touches and interests every reader. To this it has much contributed, that the poet has represented him as an old man; and by this has gained the advantage of throwing around him a great many circumstances, peculiar to that age, which paint him to the fancy in a more distinct light. He is surrounded with his family; he instructs his children in the principles of virtue; he is narrative of his past exploits; he is venerable with the grey locks of age; he is frequently disposed to moralise, like an old man, on human vanity and the prospect of death. There is more art, at least more felicity, in this, than may at first be imagined. For youth and old age are the two states of human life, capable of being placed in the most picturesque lights. Middle age is more general and vague; and has fewer circumstances peculiar to the idea of it. And when any object is in a situation, that admits it to be rendered particular, and to be cloathed with a variety of circumstances, it always stands out more clear and full in poetical description.

Besides human personages, divine or supernatural agents are often introduced into epic poetry; forming what is called the machinery of it; which most critics hold to be an essential part. The marvellous, it must be admitted, has always a great charm for the bulk of readers. It gratifies the imagination, and affords room for striking and sublime description. No wonder, therefore, that all poets should have a strong propensity towards it. But I must observe, that nothing is more difficult, than to adjust properly the marvellous with the probable. If a poet sacrifice probability, and fill his work with extravagant supernatural scenes, he spreads over it an appearance of romance and childish fiction; he transports his readers from this world, into a fantastic, visionary region; and loses that weight and dignity which should reign in epic poetry. No work, from which probability is altogether banished, can make a lasting or deep impression. Human actions and manners are always the most interesting objects which can be presented to a human mind. All machinery, therefore, is faulty which withdraws these too much from view; or obscures them under a cloud of incredible fictions. Besides being temperately employed, machinery ought always to have some foundation in popular belief. A poet is by no means at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases: he must avail himself either of the religious faith, or the supersti-

tious

tious credulity of the country wherein he lives; ſo as to give an air of probability to events which are moſt contrary to the common courſe of nature.

In theſe reſpects, Oſſian appears to me to have been remarkably happy. He has indeed followed the ſame courſe with Homer. For it is perfectly abſurd to imagine, as ſome critics have done, that Homer's mythology was invented by him, in conſequence of profound reflections on the benefit it would yield to poetry. Homer was no ſuch refining genius. He found the traditionary ſtories on which he built his Iliad, mingled with popular legends concerning the intervention of the gods; and he adopted theſe becauſe they amuſed the fancy. Oſſian, in like manner, found the tales of his country full of ghoſts and ſpirits: it is likely he believed them himſelf; and he introduced them, becauſe they gave his poems that ſolemn and marvellous caſt, which ſuited his genius. This was the only machinery he could employ with propriety; becauſe it was the only intervention of ſupernatural beings, which agreed with the common belief of the country. It was happy; becauſe it did not interfere in the leaſt with the proper diſplay of human characters and actions; becauſe it had leſs of the incredible, than moſt other kinds of poetical machinery; and becauſe it ſerved to diverſify the ſcene, and to heighten the ſubject by an

awful grandeur, which is the great deſign of machinery.

As Oſſian's mythology is peculiar to himſelf, and makes a conſiderable figure in his other poems, as well as in Fingal, it may be proper to make ſome obſervations on it, independent of its ſubſerviency to epic compoſition. It turns, for the moſt part, on the appearances of departed ſpirits. Theſe, conſonantly to the notions of every rude age, are repreſented not as purely immaterial, but as thin airy forms, which can be viſible or inviſible at pleaſure; their voice is feeble; their arm is weak; but they are endowed with knowledge more than human. In a ſeparate ſtate, they retain the ſame diſpoſitions which animated them in this life. They ride on the wind; they bend their airy bows; and purſue deer formed of clouds. The ghoſts of departed bards continue to ſing. The ghoſts of departed heroes frequent the fields of their former fame. "They reſt together in their "caves, and talk of mortal men. Their "ſongs are of other worlds. They come "ſometimes to the ear of reſt, and raiſe their "feeble voice." All this preſents to us much the ſame ſet of ideas, concerning ſpirits, as we find in the eleventh book of the Odyſſey, where Ulyſſes viſits the regions of the dead: and in the twenty-third book of the Iliad, the ghoſt of Patroclus, after appearing to Achilles, vaniſhes preciſely like one of Oſſian's, emit-

ting

ting a ſhrill, feeble cry, and melting away like ſmoke.

But though Homer's and Oſſian's ideas concerning ghoſts were of the ſame nature, we cannot but obſerve, that Oſſian's ghoſts are drawn with much ſtronger and livelier colours than thoſe of Homer. Oſſian deſcribes ghoſts with all the particularity of one who had ſeen and converſed with them, and whoſe imagination was full of the impreſſion they had left upon it. He calls up thoſe awful and tremendous ideas which the

——Simulacra modis pallentia miris

are fitted to raiſe in the human mind; and which, in Shakeſpeare's ſtyle, "harrow up "the ſoul." Crugal's ghoſt, in particular, in the beginning of the ſecond book of Fingal, may vie with any appearance of this kind, deſcribed by any epic or tragic poet whatever. Moſt poets would have contented themſelves with telling us, that he reſembled, in every particular, the living Crugal; that his form and dreſs were the ſame, only his face more pale and ſad; and that he bore the mark of the wound by which he fell. But Oſſian ſets before our eyes a ſpirit from the inviſible world, diſtinguiſhed by all thoſe features, which a ſtrong aſtoniſhed imagination would give to a ghoſt. "A dark-red ſtream "of fire comes down from the hill. Crugal "ſat upon the beam; he that lately fell by "the

" the hand of Swaran, ſtriving in the battle " of heroes. His face is like the beam of " the ſetting moon. His robes are of the " clouds of the hill. His eyes are like two " decaying flames. Dark is the wound " of his breaſt.—The ſtars dim-twinkled " through his form; and his voice was like " the ſound of a diſtant ſtream." The circumſtance of the ſtars being beheld, " dim-" twinkling through his form," is wonderfully picturesque; and conveys the moſt lively impreſſion of his thin and ſhadowy ſubſtance. The attitude in which he is afterwards placed, and the ſpeech put into his mouth, are full of that ſolemn and awful ſublimity, which ſuits the ſubject. " Dim, and in tears, he " ſtood and ſtretched his pale hand over the " hero. Faintly he raiſed his feeble voice, " like the gale of the reedy Lego.—My " ghoſt, O Connal! is on my native hills; " but my corſe is on the ſands of Ullin. " Thou ſhalt never talk with Crugal, or find " his lone ſteps in the heath. I am light as " the blaſt of Cromla; and I move like the " ſhadow of miſt. Connal, ſon of Colgar! " I ſee the dark cloud of death. It hovers " over the plains of Lena. The ſons of " green Erin ſhall fall. Remove from the " field of ghoſts.—Like the darkened moon " he retired in the midſt of the whiſtling " blaſt."

Several other appearances of ſpirits might be pointed out, as among the moſt ſublime paſſages

paſſages of Oſſian's poetry. The circumſtances of them are conſiderably diverſified; and the ſcenery always ſuited to the occaſion. "Oſcar ſlowly aſcends the hill. The meteors "of night ſet on the heath before him. A "diſtant torrent faintly roars. Unfrequent "blaſts ruſh through aged oaks. The half-"enlightened moon ſinks dim and red be-"hind her hill. Feeble voices are heard on "the heath. Oſcar drew his ſword."—— Nothing can prepare the fancy more happily for the awful ſcene that is to follow. "Tren-"mor came from his hill, at the voice of his "mighty ſon. A cloud, like the ſteed of the "ſtranger, ſupported his airy limbs. His "robe is of the miſt of Lano, that brings "death to the people. His ſword is a green "meteor, half-extinguiſhed. His face is "without form, and dark. He ſighed thrice "over the hero: and thrice, the winds of "the night roared around. Many were his "words to Oſcar.—He ſlowly vaniſhed, like "a miſt that melts on the ſunny hill." To appearances of this kind, we can find no parallel among the Greek, or Roman poets. They bring to mind that noble deſcription in the book of Job: "In thoughts from the "viſions of the night, when deep ſleep fall-"eth on men, fear came upon me, and "trembling, which made all my bones to "ſhake. Then a ſpirit paſſed before my "face. The hair of my fleſh ſtood up. It "ſtood ſtill: but I could not diſcern the form "thereof.

" thereof. An image was before mine eyes.
" There was ſilence; and I heard a voice—
" Shall mortal man be more juſt than God*?"

As Oſſian's ſupernatural beings are deſcribed with a ſurpriſing force of imagination, ſo they are introduced with propriety. We have only three ghoſts in Fingal: that of Crugal, which comes to warn the hoſt of impending deſtruction, and to adviſe them to ſave themſelves by retreat; that of Evirallin, the ſpouſe of Oſſian, which calls him to riſe and reſcue their ſon from danger; and that of Agandecca, which, juſt before the laſt engagement with Swaran, moves Fingal to pity, by mourning for the approaching deſtruction of her kinſmen and people. In the other poems, ghoſts ſometimes appear when invoked to foretel futurity; frequently, according to the notions of theſe times, they come as forerunners of misfortune or death, to thoſe whom they viſit; ſometimes they inform their friends at a diſtance, of their own death; and ſometimes they are introduced to heighten the ſcenery on ſome great and ſolemn occaſion. "A hundred oaks burn to " the wind; and faint light gleams over the " heath. The ghoſts of Ardven paſs through " the beam; and ſhew their dim and diſtant " forms. Comala is half-unſeen on her me- " teor; and Hidallan is ſullen and dim."— " The awful faces of other times, looked

* Job, iv. 13—17.

" from

"from the clouds of Crona."—"Fercuth! "I ſaw the ghoſt of night. Silent he ſtood "on that bank; his robe of miſt flew on the "wind. I could behold his tears. An aged "man he ſeemed, and full of thought."

The ghoſts of ſtrangers mingle not with thoſe of the natives. "She is ſeen; but "not like the daughters of the hill. Her "robes are from the ſtrangers land; and ſhe "is ſtill alone." When the ghoſt of one whom we had formerly known is introduced, the propriety of the living character is ſtill preſerved. This is remarkable in the appearance of Calmar's ghoſt, in the poem intitled, The Death of Cuthullin. He ſeems to forbode Cuthullin's death, and to beckon him to his cave. Cuthullin reproaches him for ſuppoſing that he could be intimidated by ſuch prognoſtics. "Why doſt thou bend "thy dark eyes on me, ghoſt of the car-"borne Calmar? Would'ſt thou frighten me, "O Matha's ſon! from the battles of Cor-"mac? Thy hand was not feeble in war; "neither was thy voice for peace. How art "thou changed, chief of Lara! if now thou "doſt adviſe to fly! Retire thou to thy "cave: thou art not Calmar's ghoſt: he "delighted in battle; and his arm was like "the thunder of heaven." Calmar makes no return to this ſeeming reproach: but, "He retired in his blaſt with joy; for he "had heard the voice of his praiſe." This is preciſely the ghoſt of Achilles in Homer; who,

who, notwithſtanding all the diſſatisfaction he expreſſes with his ſtate in the region of the dead, as ſoon as he had heard his ſon Neoptolemus praiſed for his gallant behaviour, ſtrode away with ſilent joy to rejoin the reſt of the ſhades *.

It is a great advantage of Oſſian's mythology, that it is not local and temporary, like that of moſt other ancient poets; which of courſe is apt to ſeem ridiculous, after the ſuperſtitions have paſſed away on which it was founded. Oſſian's mythology is, to ſpeak ſo, the mythology of human nature; for it is founded on what has been the popular belief, in all ages and countries, and under all forms of religion, concerning the appearances of departed ſpirits. Homer's machinery is always lively and amuſing; but far from being always ſupported with proper dignity. The indecent ſquabbles among his gods, ſurely do no honour to epic poetry. Whereas Oſſian's machinery has dignity upon all occaſions. It is indeed a dignity of the dark and awful kind; but this is proper; becauſe coincident with the ſtrain and ſpirit of the poetry. A light and gay mythology, like Homer's, would have been perfectly unſuitable to the ſubjects on which Oſſian's genius was employed. But though his machinery be always ſolemn, it is not, however, always dreary or diſmal; it is enlivened, as much as

* Odyſſ. Lib. 11.

the ſubject would permit, by thoſe pleaſant and beautiful appearances, which he ſometimes introduces, of the ſpirits of the hill. Theſe are gentle ſpirits; deſcending on ſun-beams, fair-moving on the plain; their forms white and bright; their voices ſweet; and their viſits to men propitious. The greateſt praiſe that can be given, to the beauty of a living woman, is to ſay, "She is fair as the ghoſt of "the hill; when it moves in a ſun-beam at "noon, over the ſilence of Morven." "The "hunter ſhall hear my voice from his booth. "He ſhall fear, but love my voice. For "ſweet ſhall my voice be for my friends; "for pleaſant were they to me."

Beſides ghoſts, or the ſpirits of departed men, we find in Oſſian ſome inſtances of other kinds of machinery. Spirits of a ſuperior nature to ghoſts are ſometimes alluded to, which have power to embroil the deep; to call forth winds and ſtorms, and pour them on the land of the ſtranger; to overturn foreſts, and to ſend death among the people. We have prodigies too; a ſhower of blood; and when ſome diſaſter is befalling at a diſtance, the ſound of death heard on the ſtrings of Oſſian's harp: all perfectly conſonant, not only to the peculiar ideas of northern nations, but to the general current of a ſuperſtitious imagination in all countries. The deſcription of Fingal's airy hall, in the poem called Berrathon, and of the aſcent of Malvina into it, deſerves particular notice, as remarkably

noble and magnificent. But above all, the engagement of Fingal with the ſpirit of Loda, in Carric-thura, cannot be mentioned without admiration. I forbear tranſcribing the paſſage, as it muſt have drawn the attention of every one who has read the works of Oſſian. The undaunted courage of Fingal, oppoſed to all the terrors of the Scandinavian god; the appearance and the ſpeech of that awful ſpirit; the wound which he receives, and the ſhriek which he ſends forth, "as rolled into "himſelf, he roſe upon the wind;" are full of the moſt amazing and terrible majeſty. I know no paſſage more ſublime in the writings of any uninſpired author. The fiction is calculated to aggrandiſe the hero; which it does to a high degree; nor is it ſo unnatural or wild a fiction, as might at firſt be thought. According to the notions of thoſe times, ſupernatural beings were material, and, conſequently, vulnerable. The ſpirit of Loda was not acknowledged as a deity by Fingal; he did not worſhip at the ſtone of his power; he plainly conſidered him as the god of his enemies only; as a local deity, whoſe dominion extended no farther than to the regions where he was worſhipped; who had, therefore, no title to threaten him, and no claim to his ſubmiſſion. We know there are poetical precedents of great authority, for fictions fully as extravagant; and if Homer be forgiven for making Diomed attack and wound in battle, the gods whom that chief himſelf

worſhipped,

worſhipped, Oſſian ſurely is pardonable for making his hero ſuperior to the god of a foreign territory*.

Notwithſtanding the poetical advantages which I have aſcribed to Oſſian's machinery, I acknowledge it would have been much more beautiful and perfect, had the author diſcovered ſome knowledge of a Supreme Being. Although his ſilence on this head has been accounted for by the learned and ingenious tranſlator in a very probable manner, yet ſtill it muſt be held a conſiderable diſadvantage to the poetry. For the moſt auguſt and lofty ideas that can embelliſh poetry are

* The ſcene of this encounter of Fingal with the ſpirit of Loda is laid in Iniſtore, or the iſlands of Orkney; and in the deſcription of Fingal's landing there, it is ſaid, "A rock bends along the coaſt with all its echoing wood. "On the top is the circle of Loda, with the moſſy ſtone "of power." In confirmation of Oſſian's topography, it is proper to acquaint the reader, that in theſe iſlands, as I have been well informed, there are many pillars, and circles of ſtones, ſtill remaining, known by the name of the ſtones and circles of Loda, or Loden; to which ſome degree of ſuperſtitious regard is annexed to this day. Theſe iſlands, until the year 1468, made a part of the Daniſh dominions. Their ancient language, of which there are yet ſome remains among the natives, is called the Norſe; and is a dialect, not of the Celtic, but of the Scandinavian tongue. The manners and the ſuperſtitions of the inhabitants are quite diſtinct from thoſe of the Highlands and weſtern iſles of Scotland. Their ancient ſongs, too, are of a different ſtrain and character, turning upon magical incantations and evocations from the dead, which were the favourite ſubjects of the old Runic poetry. They have many traditions among them, of wars in former times with the inhabitants of the weſtern iſlands.

derived from the belief of a divine administration of the universe: and hence the invocation of a Supreme Being, or at least of some superior powers who are conceived as presiding over human affairs, the solemnities of religious worship, prayers preferred, and assistance implored on critical occasions, appear with great dignity in the works of almost all poets as chief ornaments of their compositions. The absence of all such religious ideas from Ossian's poetry, is a sensible blank in it; the more to be regretted, as we can easily imagine what an illustrious figure they would have made under the management of such a genius as his; and how finely they would have been adapted to many situations which occur in his works.

After so particular an examination of Fingal, it were needless to enter into as full a discussion of the conduct of Temora, the other Epic Poem. Many of the same observations, especially with regard to the great characteristics of heroic poetry, apply to both. The high merit, however, of Temora, requires that we should not pass it by without some remarks.

The scene of Temora, as of Fingal, is laid in Ireland; and the action is of a posterior date. The subject is, an expedition of the hero, to dethrone and punish a bloody usurper, and to restore the possession of the kingdom to the posterity of the lawful prince: an undertaking worthy of the justice and heroism.

roiſm of the great Fingal. The action is one and complete. The poem opens with the deſcent of Fingal on the coaſt, and the conſultation held among the chiefs of the enemy. The murder of the young prince Cormac, which was the cauſe of the war, being antecedent to the epic action, is introduced with great propriety as an epiſode in the firſt book. In the progreſs of the poem, three battles are deſcribed, which riſe in their importance above one another; the ſucceſs is various, and the iſſue for ſome time doubtful; till at laſt, Fingal brought into diſtreſs, by the wound of his great general Gaul, and the death of his ſon Fillan, aſſumes the command himſelf, and having ſlain the Iriſh king in ſingle combat, reſtores the rightful heir to his throne.

Temora has perhaps leſs fire than the other epic poem; but in return it has more variety, more tenderneſs, and more magnificence. The reigning idea, ſo often preſented to us, of "Fingal in the laſt of his fields," is venerable and affecting; nor could any more noble concluſiòn be thought of, than the aged hero, after ſo many ſucceſsful atchievements, taking his leave of battles, and with all the ſolemnities of thoſe times reſigning his ſpear to his ſon. The events are leſs crowded in Temora than in Fingal; actions and characters are more particularly diſplayed; we are let into the tranſactions of both hoſts; and informed of the adventures of the night

as well as of the day. The ſtill pathetic, and the romantic ſcenery of ſeveral of the night adventures, ſo remarkably ſuited to Oſſian's genius, occaſion a fine diverſity in the poem; and are happily contraſted with the military operations of the day.

In moſt of our author's poems, the horrors of war are ſoftened by intermixed ſcenes of love and friendſhip. In Fingal, theſe are introduced as epiſodes; in Temora, we have an incident of this nature wrought into the body of the piece; in the adventure of Cathmor and Sulmalla. This forms one of the moſt conſpicuous beauties of that poem The diſtreſs of Sulmalla, diſguiſed and unknown among ſtrangers, her tender and anxious concern for the ſafety of Cathmor, her dream, and her melting remembrance of the land of her fathers; Cathmor's emotion when he firſt diſcovers her, his ſtruggles to conceal and ſuppreſs his paſſion, leſt it ſhould unman him in the midſt of war, though "his ſoul pour-"ed forth in ſecret, when he beheld her "fearful eye;" and the laſt interview between them, when overcome by her tenderneſs, he lets her know he had diſcovered her, and confeſſes his paſſion; are all wrought up with the moſt exquiſite ſenſibility and delicacy.

Beſides the characters which appeared in Fingal, ſeveral new ones are here introduced; and though, as they are all the characters of warriors, bravery is the predominant feature,

they

they are neverthelefs diverfified in a fenfible and ftriking manner. Foldath, for inftance, the general of Cathmor, exhibits the perfect picture of a favage chieftain: bold, and daring, but prefumptuous, cruel, and overbearing. He is diftinguifhed on his firft appearance, as the friend of the tyrant Cairbar; "His ftride is haughty; his red eye rolls in "wrath." In his perfon and whole deportment, he is contrafted with the mild and wife Hidalla, another leader of the fame army, on whofe humanity and gentlenefs he looks with great contempt. He profeffedly delights in ftrife and blood. He infults over the fallen. He is imperious in his counfels, and factious when they are not followed. He is unrelenting in all his fchemes of revenge, even to the length of denying the funeral fong to the dead; which, from the injury thereby done to their ghofts, was, in thofe days confidered as the greateft barbarity. Fierce to the laft, he comforts himfelf in his dying moments, with thinking that his ghoft fhall often leave its blaft to rejoice over the graves of thofe he had flain. Yet Offian, ever prone to the pathetic, has contrived to throw into his account of the death, even of this man, fome tender circumftances; by the moving defcription of his daughter Dardulena, the laft of his race.

The character of Foldath tends much to exalt that of Cathmor, the chief commander,

which is diſtinguiſhed by the moſt humane virtues. He abhors all fraud and cruelty, is famous for his hoſpitality to ſtrangers; open to every generous ſentiment, and to every ſoft and compaſſionate feeling. He is ſo amiable as to divide the reader's attachment between him and the hero of the poem; though our author has artfully managed it ſo as to make Cathmor himſelf indirectly acknowledge Fingal's ſuperiority, and to appear ſomewhat apprehenſive of the event, after the death of Fillan, which he knew would call forth Fingal in all his might. It is very remarkable, that although Oſſian has introduced into his poems three complete heroes, Cuthullin, Cathmor, and Fingal, he has, however, ſenſibly diſtinguiſhed each of their characters. Cuthullin is particularly honourable; Cathmor particularly amiable; Fingal wiſe and great, retaining an aſcendant peculiar to himſelf in whatever light he is viewed.

But the favourite figure in Temora, and the one moſt highly finiſhed, is Fillan. His character is of that ſort, for which Oſſian ſhews a particular fondneſs; an eager, fervent, young warrior, fired with all the impatient enthuſiaſm for military glory, peculiar to that time of life. He had ſketched this in the deſcription of his own ſon Oſcar; but as he has extended it more fully in Fillan, and as the character is ſo conſonant to the epic ſtrain, though, ſo far as I remember, not placed in ſuch a conſpicuous light

light by any other epic poet, it may be worth while to attend a little to Oſſian's management of it in this inſtance.

Fillan was the youngeſt of all the ſons of Fingal; younger, it is plain, than his nephew Oſcar, by whoſe fame and great deeds in war, we may naturally ſuppoſe his ambition to have been highly ſtimulated. Withal, as he is younger, he is deſcribed as more raſh and fiery. His firſt appearance is ſoon after Oſcar's death, when he was employed to watch the motions of the foe by night. In a converſation with his brother Oſſian, on that occaſion, we learn that it was not long ſince he began to lift the ſpear. "Few are the marks "of my ſword in battle; but my ſoul is fire." He is with ſome difficulty reſtrained by Oſſian from going to attack the enemy; and complains to him, that his father had never allowed him any opportunity of ſignalizing his valour. "The king hath not remarked my ſword; I "go forth with the crowd; I return without "my fame." Soon after, when Fingal, according to cuſtom, was to appoint one of his chiefs to command the army, and each was ſtanding forth, and putting in his claim to this honour, Fillan is preſented in the following moſt picturesque and natural attitude: "On his ſpear ſtood the ſon of Clatho, in "the wandering of his locks. Thrice he "raiſed his eyes to Fingal: his voice thrice "failed him as he ſpoke. Fillan could not "boaſt of battles; at once he ſtrode away.

"Bent

"Bent over a diſtant ſtream he ſtood; the "tear hung in his eye. He ſtruck, at times, "the thiſtle's head, with his inverted ſpear." No leſs natural and beautiful is the deſcription of Fingal's paternal emotion on this occaſion. "Nor is he unſeen of Fingal. Side-long he "beheld his ſon. He beheld him with burſt-"ing joy. He hid the big tear with his locks, "and turned amidſt his crowded ſoul." The command, for that day, being given to Gaul, Fillan ruſhes amidſt the thickeſt of the foe, ſaves Gaul's life, who is wounded by a random arrow, and diſtinguiſhes himſelf ſo in battle, that "the days of old return on Fin-"gal's mind, as he beholds the renown of his "ſon. As the ſun rejoices from the cloud, "over the tree his beams have raiſed, whilſt "it ſhakes its lonely head on the heath, ſo "joyful is the king over Fillan." Sedate however and wiſe, he mixes the praiſe which he beſtows on him with ſome reprehenſion of his raſhneſs. "My ſon, I ſaw thy deeds, and "my ſoul was glad. Thou art brave, ſon of "Clatho, but headlong in the ſtrife. So did "not Fingal advance, though he never feared "a foe. Let thy people be a ridge behind "thee; they are thy ſtrength in the field. "Then ſhalt thou be long renowned, and be-"hold the tombs of thy fathers."

On the next day, the greateſt and the laſt of Fillan's life, the charge is committed to him of leading on the hoſt to battle. Fingal's ſpeech to his troops on this occaſion is full of noble

noble sentiment; and, where he recommends his son to their care, extremely touching. "A young beam is before you; few are his "steps to war. They are few, but he is "valiant; defend my dark-haired son. Bring "him back with joy; hereafter he may stand "alone. His form is like his fathers; his "soul is a flame of their fire." When the battle begins, the poet puts forth his strength to describe the exploits of the young hero; who, at last encountering and killing with his own hand Foldath, the opposite general, attains the pinnacle of glory. In what follows, when the fate of Fillan is drawing near, Ossian, if any where, excels himself. Foldath being slain, and a general rout begun, there was no resource left to the enemy but in the great Cathmor himself, who in this extremity descends from the hill, where, according to the custom of those princes, he surveyed the battle. Observe how this critical event is wrought up by the poet. "Wide spreading "over echoing Lubar, the flight of Bolga is "rolled along. Fillan hung forward on their "steps; and strewed the heath with dead. "Fingal rejoiced over his son.——Blue-"shielded Cathmor rose.——Son of Alpin, "bring the harp! Give Fillan's praise to the "wind; raise high his praise in my hall, while "yet he shines in war. Leave, blue-eyed "Clatho! leave thy hall; behold that early "beam of thine! The host is withered in its "course. No farther look——it is dark——

"light-

" light-trembling from the harp, ſtrike, vir-" gins! ſtrike the ſound." The ſudden interruption, and ſuſpenſe of the narration on Cathmor's riſing from his hill, the abrupt burſting into the praiſe of Fillan, and the paſſionate apoſtrophe to his mother Clatho, are admirable efforts of poetical art, in order to intereſt us in Fillan's danger; and the whole is heightened by the immediate following ſimile, one of the moſt magnificent and ſublime that is to be met with in any poet, and which if it had been found in Homer, would have been the frequent ſubject of admiration to critics: " Fillan is like a ſpirit of " heaven, that deſcends from the ſkirt of his " blaſt. The troubled ocean feels his ſteps, " as he ſtrides from wave to wave. His path " kindles behind him; iſlands ſhake their " heads on the heaving ſeas."

But the poet's art is not yet exhauſted. The fall of this noble young warrior, or, in Oſſian's ſtyle, the extinction of this beam of heaven, could not be rendered too intereſting and affecting. Our attention is naturally drawn towards Fingal. He beholds from his hill the riſing of Cathmor, and the danger of his ſon. But what ſhall he do? " Shall Fin-" gal riſe to his aid, and take the ſword of " Luno? What then ſhall become of thy " fame, ſon of white-boſomed Clatho? Turn " not thine eyes from Fingal, daughter of " Iniſtore! I ſhall not quench thy early beam. " No cloud of mine ſhall riſe, my ſon, upon

" thy

" thy ſoul of fire."—Struggling between concern for the fame, and fear for the ſafety, of his ſon, he withdraws from the ſight of the engagement; and diſpatches Oſſian in haſte to the field, with this affectionate and delicate injunction: " Father of Oſcar!" addreſſing him by a title which on this occaſion has the higheſt propriety, " Father of Oſcar! lift the " ſpear; defend the young in arms. But " conceal thy ſteps from Fillan's eyes. He " muſt not know that I doubt his ſteel." Oſſian arrived too late. But unwilling to deſcribe Fillan vanquiſhed, the poet ſuppreſſes all the circumſtances of the combat with Cathmor; and only ſhews us the dying hero. We ſee him animated to the end with the ſame martial and ardent ſpirit; breathing his laſt in bitter regret for being ſo early cut off from the field of glory. " Oſſian, lay me in that hol- " low rock. Raiſe no ſtone above me, leſt " one ſhould aſk about my fame. I am fallen " in the firſt of my fields; fallen without re- " nown. Let thy voice alone ſend joy to " my flying ſoul. Why ſhould the bard know " where dwells the early-fallen Fillan?" He who, after tracing the circumſtances of this ſtory, ſhall deny that our bard is poſſeſſed of high ſentiment and high art, muſt be ſtrangely prejudiced indeed. Let him read the ſtory of Pallas in Virgil, which is of a ſimilar kind; and after all the praiſe he may juſtly beſtow on the elegant and finiſhed deſcription of that amiable author, let him ſay which of the two

poets unfold most of the human soul. I waive insisting on any more of the particulars in Temora; as my aim is rather to lead the reader into the genius and spirit of Ossian's poetry than to dwell on all his beauties.

The judgment and art discovered in conducting works of such length as Fingal and Temora, distinguish them from the other poems in this collection. The smaller pieces, however, contain particular beauties no less eminent. They are historical poems, generally of the elegiac kind; and plainly discover themselves to be the work of the same author. One consistent face of manners is every where presented to us; one spirit of poetry reigns; the masterly hand of Ossian appears throughout; the same rapid and animated style; the same strong colouring of imagination, and the same glowing sensibility of heart. Besides the unity which belongs to the compositions of one man, there is moreover a certain unity of subject, which very happily connects all these poems. They form the poetical history of the age of Fingal. The same race of heroes whom we had met with in the greater poems, Cuthullin, Oscar, Connal, and Gaul, return again upon the stage; and Fingal himself is always the principal figure, presented on every occasion, with equal magnificence, nay rising upon us to the last. The circumstances of Ossian's old age and blindness, his surviving all his friends, and his relating their great exploits to Malvina, the spouse or mistress of his beloved son

Oscar,

Oſcar, furniſh the fineſt poetical ſituations that fancy could deviſe for that tender pathetic which reigns in Oſſian's poetry.

On each of theſe poems there might be room for ſeparate obſervations, with regard to the conduct and diſpoſition of the incidents, as well as to the beauty of the deſcriptions and ſentiments. Carthon is a regular and highly finiſhed piece. The main ſtory is very properly introduced by Claſſammor's relation of the adventure of his youth; and this introduction is finely heightened by Fingal's ſong of mourning over Moina; in which Oſſian, ever fond of doing honour to his father, has contrived to diſtinguiſh him for being an eminent poet as well as warrior. Fingal's ſong upon this occaſion, when, "his thouſand "Bards leaned forwards from their ſeats, to "hear the voice of the King," is inferior to no paſſage in the whole book; and with great judgment put in his mouth, as the ſeriouſneſs, no leſs than the ſublimity of the ſtrain, is peculiarly ſuited to the Hero's character. In Darthula, are aſſembled almoſt all the tender images that can touch the heart of man; friendſhip, love, the affections of parents, ſons, and brothers, the diſtreſs of the aged, and the unavailing bravery of the young. The beautiful addreſs to the moon, with which the poem opens, and the tranſition from thence to the ſubject, moſt happily prepare the mind for that train of affecting events that is to follow. The ſtory is regular, dramatic, intereſting to the laſt. He who can read it without emotion

emotion may congratulate himſelf, if he pleaſes, upon being completely armed againſt ſympathetic ſorrow. As Fingal had no occaſion of appearing in the action of this poem, Oſſian makes a very artful tranſition from his narration, to what was paſſing in the halls of Selma. The ſound heard there on the ſtrings of his harp, the concern which Fingal ſhews on hearing it, and the invocation of the ghoſts of their fathers, to receive the heroes falling in a diſtant land, are introduced with great beauty of imagination to increaſe the ſolemnity, and to diverſify the ſcenery of the poem.

Carric-thura is full of the moſt ſublime dignity; and has this advantage, of being more cheerful in the ſubject, and more happy in the cataſtrophe, than moſt of the other poems: though tempered at the ſame time with epiſodes in that ſtrain of tender melancholy which ſeems to have been the great delight of Oſſian and the Bards of his age. Lathmon is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed by high generoſity of ſentiment. This is carried ſo far, particularly in the refuſal of Gaul, on one ſide, to take the advantage of a ſleeping foe; and of Lathmon, on the other, to overpower by numbers the two young warriors, as to recal into one's mind the manners of chivalry; ſome reſemblance to which may perhaps be ſuggeſted by other incidents in this collection of poems. Chivalry, however, took riſe in an age and country too remote from thoſe of Oſſian, to admit the ſuſpicion that the one could have

 borrowed

borrowed any thing from the other. So far as chivalry had any real exiſtence, the ſame military enthuſiaſm, which gave birth to it in the feudal times, might, in the days of Oſſian, that is, in the infancy of a riſing ſtate, through the operation of the ſame cauſe, very naturally produce effects of the ſame kind on the minds and manners of men. So far as chivalry was an ideal ſyſtem exiſting only in romance, it will not be thought ſurpriſing, when we reflect on the account before given of the Celtic Bards, that this imaginary refinement of heroic manners ſhould be found among them, as much, at leaſt, as among the *Trobadores*, or ſtrolling Provençal Bards, in the 10th or 11th century; whoſe ſongs, it is ſaid, firſt gave riſe to thoſe romantic ideas of heroiſm, which for ſo long a time enchanted Europe*. Oſſian's heroes have all the gallantry and generoſity of thoſe fabulous knights, without their extravagance; and his love ſcenes have native tenderneſs, without any mixture of thoſe forced and unnatural conceits which abound in the old romances. The adventures related by our poet which reſemble the moſt thoſe of romance, concern women who follow their lovers to war diſguiſed in the armour of men; and theſe are ſo managed as to produce, in the diſcovery, ſeveral of the moſt intereſting ſituations; one beautiful inſtance of which may be ſeen in Carric-thura, and another in Calthon and Colmal.

* Vid. Huetius de origine fabularum Romanenſium.

Oithona preſents a ſituation of a different nature. In the abſence of her lover Gaul, ſhe had been carried off and raviſhed by Dunrommath. Gaul diſcovers the place where ſhe pesikt concealed, and comes to revenge her. The meeting of the two lovers, the ſentiments and the behaviour of Oithona on that occaſion, are deſcribed with ſuch tender and exquiſite propriety, as does the greateſt honour both to the art and to the delicacy of our author; and would have been admired in any poet of the moſt refined age. The conduct of Croma muſt ſtrike every reader as remarkably judicious and beautiful. We are to be prepared for the death of Malvina, which is related in the ſucceeding poem. She is therefore introduced in perſon; "ſhe has heard a voice in a dream; "ſhe feels the fluttering of her ſoul;" and in a moſt moving lamentation addreſſed to her beloved Oſcar, ſhe ſings her own Death-ſong. Nothing could be calculated with more art to ſooth and comfort her than the ſtory which Oſſian relates. In the young and brave Fovargormo, another Oſcar is introduced; his praiſes are ſung; and the happineſs is ſet before her of thoſe who die in their youth, "when their renown is around them; before "the feeble behold them in the hall, and ſmile "at their trembling hands."

But no where does Oſſian's genius appear to greater advantage, than in Berrathôn, which is reckoned the concluſion of his

ſongs,

ſongs, "The laſt ſound of the voice of "Cona."

> Qualis olor noto poſiturus littore vitam,
> Ingemit, et mæſtis mulcens concentibus auras
> Præſago quæritur venientia funera cantu.

The whole train of ideas is admirably ſuited to the ſubject. Every thing is full of that inviſible world, into which the aged Bard believes himſelf now ready to enter. The airy hall of Fingal preſents itſelf to his view; "he "ſees the cloud that ſhall receive his ghoſt; "he beholds the miſt that ſhall form his robe "when he appears on his hill;" and all the natural objects around him ſeem to carry the preſages of death. "The thiſtle ſhakes its "beard to the wind. The flower hangs its "heavy head; it ſeems to ſay, I am covered "with the drops of heaven; the time of my "departure is near, and the blaſt that ſhall "ſcatter my leaves." Malvina's death is hinted to him in the moſt delicate manner by the ſon of Alpin. His lamentation over her, her apotheoſis, or aſcent to the habitation of heroes, and the introduction to the ſtory which follows from the mention which Oſſian ſuppoſes the father of Malvina to make of him in the hall of Fingal, are all in the higheſt ſpirit of poetry. "And doſt thou remember Oſ-"ſian, O Toſcar ſon of Comloch? The bat-"tles of our youth were many; our ſwords "went together to the field." Nothing could

 be

be more proper than to end his ſongs with recording an exploit of the father of that Malvina, of whom his heart was now ſo full; and who, from firſt to laſt, had been ſuch a favourite object throughout all his poems.

The ſcene of moſt of Oſſian's poems is laid in Scotland, or in the coaſt of Ireland oppoſite to the territories of Fingal. When the ſcene is in Ireland, we perceive no change of manners from thoſe of Oſſian's native country. For as Ireland was undoubtedly peopled with Celtic tribes, the language, cuſtoms, and religion of both nations were the ſame. They had been ſeparated from one another, by migration, only a few generations, as it ſhould ſeem, before our poet's age; and they ſtill maintained a cloſe and frequent intercourſe. But when the poet relates the expeditions of any of his heroes to the Scandinavian coaſt, or to the iſlands of Orkney, which were then part of the Scandinavian territory, as he does in Carric-thura, Sulmalla of Lumon, and Cathloda, the caſe is quite altered. Thoſe countries were inhabited by nations of the Teutonic deſcent, who in their manners and religious rites differed widely from the Celtæ; and it is curious and remarkable, to find this difference clearly pointed out in the poems of Oſſian. His deſcriptions bear the native marks of one who was preſent in the expeditions, which he relates, and who deſcribes what he had ſeen with his own eyes. No ſooner

ſooner are we carried to Lochlin, or the iſlands of Iniſtore, than we perceive that we are in a foreign region. New objects begin to appear. We meet every where with the ſtones and circles of Loda, that is, Odin, the great Scandinavian deity. We meet with the divinations and inchantments, for which it is well known thoſe northern nations were early famous. "There, mixed with the murmur "of waters, roſe the voice of aged men, who "called the forms of night to aid them in "their war;" whilſt the Caledonian chiefs, who aſſiſted them, are deſcribed as ſtanding at a diſtance, heedleſs of their rites. That ferocity of manners which diſtinguiſhed thoſe nations, alſo becomes conſpicuous. In the combats of their chiefs there is a peculiar ſavageneſs; even their women are bloody and fierce. The ſpirit, and the very ideas of Regner Lodbrog, that northern ſcalder whom I formerly quoted, occur to us again. "The hawks," Oſſian makes one of the Scandinavian chiefs ſay, "ruſh from all their winds; they are "wont to trace my courſe. We rejoiced "three days above the dead, and called the "hawks of heaven. They came from all their "winds, to feaſt on the foes of Annir."

Diſmiſſing now the ſeparate conſideration of any of our author's works, I proceed to make ſome obſervations on his manner of writing, under the general heads of Deſcription, Imagery, and Sentiment.

A poet of original genius is always diſtinguiſhed by his talent for deſcription*. A ſecond-rate writer diſcerns nothing new or peculiar in the object he means to deſcribe. His conceptions of it are vague and looſe; his expreſſions feeble; and of courſe the object is preſented to us indiſtinctly and as through a cloud. But a true poet makes us imagine that we ſee it before our eyes; he catches the diſtinguiſhing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in ſuch a light that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a lively imagination, which firſt receives a ſtrong impreſſion of the object; and then, by a proper ſelection of capital pictureſque circumſtances employed in deſcribing it, tranſmits that impreſſion in its full force to the imaginations of others. That Oſſian poſſeſſes this deſcriptive power in a high degree, we have a clear proof from the effect which his deſcriptions produce upon the imaginations of thoſe who read him with any degree of attention and taſte. Few poets are more intereſting. We contract an intimate acquaintance with his principal heroes. The characters, the manners, the face of the country, become familiar: we even think we could draw the figure of his ghoſts. In a word, whilſt reading him we are tranſ-

* See the rules of poetical deſcription excellently illuſtrated by lord Kaims, in his Elements of Criticiſm, vol. iii. chap. 21. Of narration and deſcription.

ported

ported as into a new region, and dwell among his objects as if they were all real.

It were easy to point out several instances of exquisite painting in the works of our author. Such, for instance, as the scenery with which Temora opens, and the attitude in which Cairbar is there presented to us; the description of the young prince Cormac, in the same book; and the ruins of Balclutha in Cartho. "I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they "were desolate. The fire had resounded in "the halls; and the voice of the people is "heard no more. The stream of Clutha was "removed from its place by the fall of the "walls. The thistle shook there its lonely "head: the moss whistled to the wind. The "fox looked out from the windows; the rank "grass of the wall waved round his head. "Desolate is the dwelling of Moina; silence "is in the house of her fathers." Nothing also can be more natural and lively than the manner in which Carthon afterwards describes how the conflagration of his city affected him when a child: "Have I not seen the fallen "Balclutha? And shall I feast with Comhal's "son? Comhal! who threw his fire in the "midst of my father's hall! I was young, and "knew not the cause why the virgins wept. "The columns of smoke pleased mine eye, "when they rose above my walls: I often "looked back with gladness, when my friends "fled above the hill. But when the years of "my youth came on, I beheld the moss of

" my fallen walls. My ſigh aroſe with the
" morning; and my tears deſcended with
" night. Shall I not fight, I ſaid to my ſoul,
" againſt thc children of my foes? And I will
" fight, O Bard! I feel the ſtrength of my
" ſoul." In the ſame poem, the aſſembling of the chiefs round Fingal, who had been warned of ſome impending danger by the appearance of a prodigy, is deſcribed with ſo many pictureſque circumſtances, that one imagines himſelf preſent in the aſſembly. " The
" king alone beheld the terrible ſight, and he
" foreſaw the death of his people. He came
" in ſilence to his hall, and took his father's
" ſpear; the mail rattled on his breaſt. The
" heroes roſe around. They looked in ſilence
" on each other, marking the eyes of Fingal.
" They ſaw the battle in his face. A thouſand
" ſhields are placed at once on their arms;
" and they drew a thouſand ſwords. The
" hall of Selma brightened around. The
" clang of arms aſcends. The grey dogs
" howl in their place. No word is among
" the mighty chiefs. Each marked the eyes
" of the king; and half-aſſumed his ſpear."

It has been objected to Oſſian, that his deſcriptions of military actions are imperfect, and much leſs diverſified by circumſtances than thoſe of Homer. This is in ſome meaſure true. The amazing fertility of Homer's invention is no where ſo much diſplayed as in the incidents of his battles, and in the little hiſtory pieces he gives of the perſons ſlain.

Nor

Nor indeed, with regard to the talent of deſcription, can too much be ſaid in praiſe of Homer. Every thing is alive in his writings. The colours with which he paints are thoſe of nature. But Oſſian's genius was of a different kind from Homer's. It led him to hurry towards grand objects, rather than to amuſe himſelf with particulars of leſs importance. He could dwell on the death of a favourite hero; but that of a private man ſeldom ſtopped his rapid courſe. Homer's genius was more comprehenſive than Oſſian's. It included a wider circle of objects; and could work up any incident into deſcription. Oſſian's was more limited; but the region within which it chiefly exerted itſelf was the higheſt of all, the region of the pathetic and ſublime.

We muſt not imagine, however, that Oſſian's battles conſiſt only of general indiſtinct deſcription. Such beautiful incidents are ſometimes introduced, and the circumſtances of the perſons ſlain ſo much diverſified, as ſhew that he could have embelliſhed his military ſcenes with an abundant variety of particulars, if his genius had led him to dwell upon them. "One man is ſtretched in the duſt of his native land; he fell, where often he had ſpread "the feaſt, and often raiſed the voice of the "harp." The maid of Iniſtore is introduced, in a moving apoſtrophe, as weeping for another; and a third, "as rolled in the duſt he "lifted his faint eyes to the king," is remembered and mourned by Fingal as the friend of Agandecca.

Agandecca. The blood pouring from the wound of one who is ſlain by night, is heard "hiſſing on the half-extinguiſhed oak," which had been kindled for giving light: Another, climbing a tree to eſcape from his foe, is pierced by his ſpear from behind; "ſhriek-"ing, panting he fell; whilſt moſs and "withered branches purſue his fall, and ſtrew "the blue arms of Gaul." Never was a finer picture drawn of the ardour of two youthful warriors than the following: "I ſaw Gaul in "his armour, and my ſoul was mixed with "his: for the fire of the battle was in his "eyes; he looked to the foe with joy. We "ſpoke the words of friendſhip in ſecret; and "the lightning of our ſwords poured together. "We drew them behind the wood, and tried "the ſtrength of our arms on the empty air."

Oſſian is always conciſe in his deſcriptions, which adds much to their beauty and force. For it is a great miſtake to imagine, that a crowd of particulars, or a very full and extended ſtyle, is of advantage to deſcription. On the contrary, ſuch a diffuſe manner for the moſt part weakens it. Any one redundant circumſtance is a nuiſance. It encumbers and loads the fancy, and renders the main image indiſtinct. "Obſtat," as Quintilian ſays with regard to ſtyle, "quicquid non adjuvat." To be conciſe in deſcription, is one thing; and to be general, is another. No deſcription that reſts in generals can poſſibly be good; it can convey no lively idea; for it is of particulars only

only that we have a diſtinct conception. But at the ſame time, no ſtrong imagination dwells long upon any one particular; or heaps together a maſs of trivial ones. By the happy choice of ſome one, or of a few that are the moſt ſtriking, it preſents the image more complete, ſhews us more at one glance, than a feeble imagination is able to do, by turning its object round and round into a variety of lights. Tacitus is of all proſe writers the moſt conciſe. He has even a degree of abruptneſs reſembling our author: yet no writer is more eminent for lively deſcription. When Fingal, after having conquered the haughty Swaran, propoſes to diſmiſs him with honour: "Raiſe to-"morrow thy white ſails to the wind, thou "brother of Agandecca!" He conveys, by thus addreſſing his enemy, a ſtronger impreſſion of the emotions then paſſing within his mind, than if whole paragraphs had been ſpent in deſcribing the conflict between reſentment againſt Swaran and the tender remembrance of his ancient love. No amplification is needed to give us the moſt full idea of a hardy veteran, after the few following words; "His ſhield is marked with the ſtrokes of "battle; his red eye deſpiſes danger." When Oſcar, left alone, was ſurrounded by foes, "he ſtood," it is ſaid, "growing in his place, "like the flood of the narrow vale;" a happy repreſentation of one, who, by daring intrepidity in the midſt of danger, ſeems to increaſe in his appearance, and becomes more formi-

dable

dable every moment, like the ſudden riſing of the torrent hemmed in by the valley. And a whole crowd of ideas, concerning the circumſtances of domeſtic ſorrow occaſioned by a young warrior's firſt going forth to battle, is poured upon the mind by theſe words: "Calmar leaned on his father's ſpear; that ſpear "which he brought from Lara's hall, when "the ſoul of his mother was ſad."

The conciſeneſs of Oſſian's deſcriptions is the more proper on account of his ſubjects. Deſcriptions of gay and ſmiling ſcenes may, without any diſadvantage, be amplified and prolonged. Force is not the predominant quality expected in theſe. The deſcription may be weakened by being diffuſe, yet, notwithſtanding, may be beautiful ſtill. Whereas, with reſpect to grand, ſolemn, and pathetic, ſubjects, which are Oſſian's chief field, the caſe is very different. In theſe, energy is above all things required. The imagination muſt be ſeized at once, or not at all; and is far more deeply impreſſed by one ſtrong and ardent image, than by the anxious minuteneſs of laboured illuſtration.

But Oſſian's genius, though chiefly turned towards the ſublime and pathetic, was not confined to it. In ſubjects alſo of grace and delicacy, he diſcovers the hand of a maſter. Take for an example the following elegant deſcription of Agandecca, wherein the tenderneſs of Tibullus ſeems united with the majeſty of Virgil. "The daughter of the ſnow over-

" heard, and left the hall of her ſecret ſigh. " She came in all her beauty; like the moon " from the cloud of the Eaſt. Lovelineſs was " around her as light. Her ſteps were like " the muſic of ſongs. She ſaw the youth and " loved him. He was the ſtolen ſigh of her " ſoul. Her blue eyes rolled on him in ſecret; " and ſhe bleſt the chief of Morven." Several other inſtances might be produced of the feelings of love and friendſhip painted by our author with a moſt natural and happy delicacy.

The ſimplicity of Oſſian's manner adds great beauty to his deſcriptions, and indeed to his whole poetry. We meet with no affected ornaments; no forced refinement; no marks either in ſtyle or thought of a ſtudied endeavour to ſhine and ſparkle. Oſſian appears every where to be prompted by his feelings; and to ſpeak from the abundance of his heart. I remember no more than one inſtance of what can be called quaint thought in this whole collection of his works. It is in the firſt book of Fingal, where, from the tombs of two lovers two lonely yews are mentioned to have ſprung, " whoſe branches wiſhed to " meet on high." This ſympathy of the trees with the lovers, may be reckoned to border on an Italian conceit; and it is ſomewhat curious to find this ſingle inſtance of that ſort of wit in our Celtic poetry.

The " joy of grief," is one of Oſſian's remarkable expreſſions, ſeveral times repeated. If any one ſhall think that it needs to be juſti-

fied

fied by a precedent, he may find it twice uſed by Homer; in the Iliad, when Achilles is viſited by the ghoſt of Patroclus; and in the Odyſſey, when Ulyſſes meets his mother in the ſhades. On both theſe occaſions, the heroes, melted with tenderneſs, lament their not having it in their power to throw their arms round the ghoſt, "that we might," ſay they, "in a mutual embrace, enjoy the "delight of grief."

——Κρυεροῖο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο*.

But in truth the expreſſion ſtands in need of no defence from authority; for it is a natural and juſt expreſſion; and conveys a clear idea of that gratification, which a virtuous heart often feels in the indulgence of a tender melancholy. Oſſian makes a very proper diſtinction between this gratification and the deſtructive effect of over-powering grief. "There is a joy in grief, when peace dwells "in the breaſts of the ſad. But ſorrow waſtes "the mournful, O daughter of Toſcar, and "their days are few." To "give the joy of "grief," generally ſignifies to raiſe the ſtrain of ſoft and grave muſic; and finely characteriſes the taſte of Oſſian's age and country. In thoſe days, when the ſongs of bards were the great delight of heroes, the tragic muſe was held in chief honour; gallant actions, and virtuous ſufferings, were the choſen theme; preferably to that light and trifling ſtrain of

* Odyſſ. xi. 211. Iliad, xxiii. 98.

poetry and muſic, which promotes light and trifling manners, and ſerves to emaſculate the mind. "Strike the harp in my hall," ſaid the great Fingal, in the midſt of youth and victory, "ſtrike the harp in my hall, and let "Fingal hear the ſong. Pleaſant is the joy "of grief! It is like the ſhower of ſpring, "when it ſoftens the branch of the oak; and "the young leaf lifts its green head. Sing "on, O bards! To-morrow we lift the ſail."

Perſonal epithets have been much uſed by all the poets of the moſt ancient ages: and when well choſen, not general and unmeaning, they contribute not a little to render the ſtyle deſcriptive and animated. Beſides epithets founded on bodily diſtinctions, a-kin to many of Homer's, we find in Oſſian ſeveral which are remarkably beautiful and poetical. Such as, Oſcar of the future fights, Fingal of the mildeſt look, Carril of other times, the mildly-bluſhing Evirallin; Bragela, the lonely ſun-beam of Dunſcaich; a Culdee, the ſon of the ſecret cell.

But of all the ornaments employed in deſcriptive poetry, compariſons or ſimiles are the moſt ſplendid. Theſe chiefly form what is called the imagery of a poem; and as they abound ſo much in the works of Oſſian, and are commonly among the favourite paſſages of all poets, it may be expected that I ſhould be ſomewhat particular in my remarks upon them.

A poetical

A poetical ſimile always ſuppoſes two objects brought together, between which there is ſome near relation or connection in the fancy. What that relation ought to be, cannot be preciſely defined. For various, almoſt numberleſs, are the analogies formed among objects, by a ſprightly imagination. The relation of actual ſimilitude, or likeneſs of appearance, is far from being the only foundation of poetical compariſon. Sometimes a reſemblance in the effect produced by two objects, is made the connecting principle: ſometimes a reſemblance in one diſtinguiſhing property or circumſtance. Very often two objects are brought together in a ſimile, though they reſemble one another, ſtrictly ſpeaking, in nothing, only becauſe they raiſe in the mind a train of ſimilar, and what may be called, concordant ideas; ſo that the remembrance of the one, when recalled, ſerves to quicken and heighten the impreſſion made by the other. Thus, to give an inſtance from our poet, the pleaſure with which an old man looks back on the exploits of his youth, has certainly no direct reſemblance to the beauty of a fine evening; farther than that both agree in producing a certain calm, placid joy. Yet Oſſian has founded upon this, one of the moſt beautiful compariſons that is to be met with in any poet. "Wilt "thou not liſten, ſon of the rock, to the ſong "of Oſſian? My ſoul is full of other times; "the

" the joy of my youth returns. Thus the " ſun appears in the weſt, after the ſteps of " his brightneſs have moved behind a ſtorm. " The green hills lift their dewy heads. The " blue ſtreams rejoice in the vale. The aged " hero comes forth on his ſtaff; and his grey " hair glitters in the beam." Never was there a finer group of objects. It raiſes a ſtrong conception of the old man's joy and elation of heart, by diſplaying a ſcene which produces in every ſpectator a correſponding train of pleaſing emotions; the declining ſun looking forth in his brightneſs after a ſtorm; the cheerful face of all nature; and the ſtill life finely animated by the circumſtance of the aged hero, with his ſtaff and his grey locks; a circumſtance both extremely pictureſque in itſelf, and peculiarly ſuited to the main object of the compariſon. Such analogies and aſſociations of ideas as theſe, are highly pleaſing to the fancy. They give opportunity for introducing many a fine poetical picture. They diverſify the ſcene; they aggrandize the ſubject; they keep the imagination awake and ſprightly. For as the judgment is principally exerciſed in diſtinguiſhing objects, and remarking the differences among thoſe which ſeem like; ſo the higheſt amuſement of the imagination is to trace likeneſſes and agreements among thoſe which ſeem different.

The principal rules which reſpect poetical compariſons are, that they be introduced on proper occaſions, when the mind is diſpoſed

to relifh them; and not in the midft of fome fevere and agitating paffion, which cannot admit this play of fancy; that they be founded on a refemblance neither too near and obvious, fo as to give little amufement to the imagination in tracing it, nor too faint and remote, fo as to be apprehended with difficulty; that they ferve either to illuftrate the principal object, and to render the conception of it more clear and diftinct; or at leaft, to heighten and embellifh it, by a fuitable affociation of images *.

Every country has a fcenery peculiar to itfelf; and the imagery of a good poet will exhibit it. For as he copies after nature, his allufions will of courfe be taken from thofe objects which he fees around him, and which have often ftruck his fancy. For this reafon, in order to judge of the propriety of poetical imagery, we ought to be, in fome meafure, acquainted with the natural hiftory of the country where the fcene of the poem is laid. The introduction of foreign images betrays a poet, copying not from nature, but from other writers. Hence fo many lions, and tigers, and eagles, and ferpents, which we meet with in the fimiles of modern poets; as if thefe animals had acquired fome right to a place in poetical comparifons for ever, becaufe employed by ancient authors. They employed them with propriety, as objects generally known in their

* See Elements of Criticifm, ch. 19. vol. 3.

country;

country; but they are abſurdly uſed for illuſtration by us, who know them only at ſecond-hand, or by deſcription. To moſt readers of modern poetry, it were more to the purpoſe to deſcribe lions or tigers by ſimiles taken from men, than to compare men to lions. Oſſian is very correct in this particular. His imagery is, without exception, copied from that face of nature which he ſaw before his eyes; and by conſequence may be expected to be lively. We meet with no Grecian or Italian ſcenery; but with the miſts, and clouds, and ſtorms, of a northern mountainous region.

No poet abounds more in ſimiles than Oſſian. There are in this collection as many, at leaſt, as in the whole Iliad and Odyſſey of Homer. I am indeed inclined to think, that the works of both poets are too much crowded with them. Similes are ſparkling ornaments; and, like all things that ſparkle, are apt to dazzle and tire us by their luſtre. But if Oſſian's ſimiles be too frequent, they have this advantage of being commonly ſhorter than Homer's; they interrupt his narration leſs; he juſt glances aſide to ſome reſembling object, and inſtantly returns to his former track. Homer's ſimiles include a wider range of objects. But in return, Oſſian's are, without exception, taken from objects of dignity, which cannot be ſaid for all thoſe which Homer employs. The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, Clouds and Meteors, Lightning and

 Thunder,

Thunder, Seas and Whales, Rivers, Torrents, Winds, Ice, Rain, Snow, Dews, Miſt, Fire and Smoke, Trees and Foreſts, Heath and Graſs and Flowers, Rocks and Mountains, Muſic and Songs, Light and Darkneſs, Spirits and Ghoſts; theſe form the circle within which Oſſian's compariſons generally run. Some, not many, are taken from Birds and Beaſts; as Eagles, Sea Fowl, the Horſe, the Deer, and the mountain Bee; and a very few from ſuch operations of art as were then known. Homer has diverſified his imagery by many more alluſions to the animal world; to Lions, Bulls, Goats, Herds of Cattle, Serpents, Inſects; and to the various occupations of rural and paſtoral life. Oſſian's defect in this article, is plainly owing to the deſert, uncultivated ſtate of his country, which ſuggeſted to him few images beyond natural inanimate objects, in their rudeſt form. The birds and animals of the country were probably not numerous; and his acquaintance with them was ſlender, as they were little ſubjected to the uſes of man.

The great objection made to Oſſian's imagery, is its uniformity, and the too frequent repetition of the ſame compariſons. In a work ſo thick ſown with ſimiles, one could not but expect to find images of the ſame kind ſometimes ſuggeſted to the poet by reſembling objects; eſpecially to a poet like Oſſian, who wrote from the immediate impulſe of poetical enthuſiaſm, and without much preparation of ſtudy or labour. Fertile as Homer's imagination

nation is acknowledged to be, who does not know how often his Lions and Bulls, and Flocks of Sheep, recur with little or no variation; nay, ſometimes in the very ſame words? The objection made to Oſſian is, however, founded, in a great meaſure, upon a miſtake. It has been ſuppoſed by inattentive readers, that wherever the Moon, the Cloud, or the Thunder, returns in a ſimile, it is the ſame ſimile, and the ſame Moon, or Cloud, or Thunder, which they had met with a few pages before. Whereas very often the ſimiles are widely different. The object, whence they are taken, is indeed in ſubſtance the ſame; but the image is new; for the appearance of the object is changed; it is preſented to the fancy in another attitude; and clothed with new circumſtances, to make it ſuit the different illuſtration for which it is employed. In this lies Oſſian's great art; in ſo happily varying the form of the few natural appearances with which he was acquainted, as to make them correſpond to a great many different objects.

Let us take for one inſtance the Moon, which is very frequently introduced into his compariſons; as in northern climates, where the nights are long, the Moon is a greater object of attention than in the climate of Homer; and let us view how much our poet has diverſified its appearance. The ſhield of a warrior is like "the darkened moon when "it moves a dun circle through the heavens."

 The

The face of a ghoſt, wan and pale, is like "the beam of the ſetting moon." And a different appearance of a ghoſt, thin and indiſtinct, is like "the new moon ſeen through "the gathered miſt, when the ſky pours "down its flaky ſnow, and the world is ſilent "and dark;" or, in a different form ſtill, is like "the watery beam of the moon, when it "ruſhes from between two clouds, and the "midnight ſhower is on the field." A very oppoſite uſe is made of the moon in the deſcription of Agandecca: "She came in all "her beauty, like the moon from the cloud "of the Eaſt." Hope, ſucceeded by diſappoint-"ment, is "joy riſing on her face, and ſorrow "returning again, like a thin cloud on the "moon." But when Swaran, after his defeat, is cheered by Fingal's generoſity, "His face "brightened like the full moon of heaven, when "the clouds vaniſh away, and leave her calm "and broad in the midſt of the ſky." Venvela is "bright as the moon when it trembles o'er "the weſtern wave;" but the ſoul of the guilty Uthal is "dark as the troubled face of "the moon, when it fortels the ſtorm." And by a very fanciful and uncommon alluſion, it is ſaid of Cormac, who was to die in his early years, "Nor long ſhalt thou lift the ſpear, "mildly ſhining beam of youth! Death "ſtands dim behind thee, like the darkened "half of the moon behind its growing light."

Another inſtance of the ſame nature may be taken from miſt, which, as being a very

familiar

familiar appearance in the country of Oſſian, he applies to a variety of purpoſes, and purſues through a great many forms. Sometimes, which one would hardly expect, he employs it to heighten the appearance of a beautiful object. The hair of Morna is "like "the miſt of Cromla, when it curls on the "rock, and ſhines to the beam of the weſt." —"The ſong comes with its muſic to melt "and pleaſe the ear. It is like ſoft miſt, that "riſing from a lake pours on the ſilent vale. "The green flowers are filled with dew. The "ſun returns in its ſtrength, and the miſt is "gone *."—But, for the moſt part, miſt is employed as a ſimilitude of ſome diſagreeable or terrible object. "The ſoul of Nathos was "ſad, like the ſun in the day of miſt, when "his face is watery and dim." "The darkneſs of old age comes like the miſt of the "deſert." The face of a ghoſt is "pale as "the miſt of Cromla." "The gloom of "battle is rolled along as miſt that is poured

* There is a remarkable propriety in this compariſon. It is intended to explain the effect of ſoft and mournful muſic. Armin appears diſturbed at a performance of this kind. Carmor ſays to him, "Why burſts the ſigh "of Armin? Is there a cauſe to mourn? The ſong "comes with its muſic to melt and pleaſe the ear. It is "like ſoft miſt, &c." that is, ſuch mournful ſongs have a happy effect to ſoften the heart, and to improve it by tender emotions, as the moiſture of the miſt refreſhes and nouriſhes the flowers; whilſt the ſadneſs they occaſion is only tranſient, and ſoon diſpelled by the ſucceeding occupations and amuſements of life: "The ſun re- "turns in its ſtrength, and the miſt is gone."

" on the valley, when ſtorms invade the ſilent " ſun-ſhine of heaven." Fame, ſuddenly departing, is likened to " miſt that flies away " before the ruſtling wind of the vale." A ghoſt, ſlowly vaniſhing, to " miſt that melts " by degrees on the ſunny hill." Cairbar, after his treacherous aſſaſſination of Oſcar, is compared to a peſtilential fog. " I love a foe " like Cathmor," ſays Fingal, " his ſoul is " great; his arm is ſtrong; his battles are full " of fame. But the little ſoul is like a vapour that hovers round the marſhy lake. " It never riſes on the green hill, leſt the " winds meet it there. Its dwelling is in the " cave; and it ſends forth the dart of death." This is a ſimile highly finiſhed. But there is another which is ſtill more ſtriking, founded alſo on miſt, in the 4th book of Temora. Two factious chiefs are contending; Cathmor the king interpoſes, rebukes, and ſilences them. The poet intends to give us the higheſt idea of Cathmor's ſuperiority; and moſt effectually accompliſhes his intention by the following happy image. " They ſunk from the king " on either ſide, like two columns of morning miſt, when the ſun riſes between them, " on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on either ſide; each towards its reedy " pool." Theſe inſtances may ſufficiently ſhew with what richneſs of imagination Oſſian's comparisons abound, and at the ſame time, with what propriety of judgment they are employed. If his field was narrow, it muſt

must be admitted to have been as well cultivated as its extent would allow.

As it is usual to judge of poets from a comparison of their similes more than of other passages, it will perhaps be agreeable to the reader, to see how Homer and Ossian have conducted some images of the same kind. This might be shewn in many instances. For as the great objects of nature are common to the poets of all nations, and make the general store-house of all imagery, the ground-work of their comparisons must of course be frequently the same. I shall select only a few of the most considerable from both poets. Mr. Pope's translation of Homer can be of no use to us here. The parallel is altogether unfair between prose, and the imposing harmony of flowing numbers. It is only by viewing Homer in the simplicity of a prose translation, that we can form any comparison between the two bards.

The shock of two encountering armies, the noise and the tumult of battle, afford one of the most grand and awful subjects of description; on which all epic poets have exerted their strength. Let us first hear Homer. The following description is a favourite one, for we find it twice repeated in the same words *. "When now the conflicting hosts "joined in the field of battle, then were mu-"tually opposed shields, and swords, and the

* Iliad, iv. 446. and Iliad, viii. 60.

"strength

" ſtrength of armed men. The boſſy bucklers
" were daſhed againſt each other. The uni-
" verſal tumult roſe. There were mingled
" the triumphant ſhouts and the dying groans
" of the victors and the vanquiſhed. The
" earth ſtreamed with blood. As when win-
" ter torrents, ruſhing from the mountains,
" pour into a narrow valley, their violent
" waters. They iſſue from a thouſand
" ſprings, and mix in the hollowed channel.
" The diſtant ſhepherd hears on the moun-
" tain, their roar from afar. Such was the
" terror and the ſhout of the engaging armies."
In another paſſage, the poet, much in the manner of Oſſian, heaps ſimile on ſimile, to expreſs the vaſtneſs of the idea, with which his imagination ſeems to labour. " With a
" mighty ſhout the hoſts engage. Not ſo loud
" roars the wave of ocean, when driven againſt
" the ſhore by the whole force of the boiſ-
" terous north; not ſo loud in the woods of
" the mountain, the noiſe of the flame, when
" riſing in its fury to conſume the foreſt; not
" ſo loud the wind among the lofty oaks,
" when the wrath of the ſtorm rages; as was
" the clamour of the Greeks and Trojans,
" when, roaring terrible, they ruſhed againſt
" each other*."

To theſe deſcriptions and ſimiles, we may oppoſe the following from Oſſian, and leave the reader to judge between them. He will find images of the ſame kind employed; com-

* Iliad, xiv. 393.

monly

monly leſs extended; but thrown forth with a glowing rapidity which characteriſes our poet. "As autumn's dark ſtorms pour from "two echoing hills, towards each other, ap-"proached the heroes. As two dark ſtreams "from high rocks meet and mix, and roar on "the plain; loud, rough, and dark in battle, "meet Lochlin and Inisfail. Chief mixed "his ſtrokes with chief, and man with man. "Steel clanging, ſounded on ſteel. Helmets "are cleft on high; blood burſts and ſmoaks "around.—As the troubled noiſe of the "ocean, when roll the waves on high; as the "laſt peal of the thunder of heaven, ſuch is "the noiſe of battle."—"As roll a thouſand "waves to the rock, ſo Swaran's hoſt came "on; as meets a rock a thouſand waves, ſo "Inisfail met Swaran. Death raiſes all his "voices around, and mixes with the ſound of "ſhields.—The field echoes from wing to "wing, as a hundred hammers that riſe by "turns on the red ſon of the furnace."—"As a hundred winds on Morven; as the "ſtreams of a hundred hills; as clouds fly "ſucceſſive over heaven; or as the dark ocean "aſſaults the ſhore of the deſert; ſo roaring, "ſo vaſt, ſo terrible, the armies mixed on "Lena's echoing heath." In ſeveral of theſe images, there is a remarkable ſimilarity to Homer's; but what follows is ſuperior to any compariſon that Homer uſes on this ſubject. "The groan of the people ſpread over the "hills; it was like the thunder of night, when

" the cloud burſts on Cona; and a thouſand
" ghoſts ſhriek at once on the hollow wind."
Never was an image of more awful ſublimity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

Both poets compare the appearance of an army approaching, to the gathering of dark clouds. " As when a ſhepherd," ſays Homer, " beholds from the rock a cloud borne along " the ſea by the weſtern wind; black as pitch " it appears from afar ſailing over the ocean, " and carrying the dreadful ſtorm. He ſhrinks " at the ſight, and drives his flock into the " cave: Such, under the Ajaces, moved on, " the dark, the thickened phalanx to the " war*."—" They came," ſays Oſſian, " over " the deſert like ſtormy clouds, when the " winds roll them over the heath; their edges " are tinged with lightning; and the echoing " groves foreſee the ſtorm." The edges of the cloud tinged with lightning, is a ſublime idea; but the ſhepherd and his flock, render Homer's ſimile more picturesque. This is frequently the difference between the two poets. Oſſian gives no more than the main image, ſtrong and full. Homer adds circumſtances and appendages, which amuſe the fancy by enlivening the ſcenery.

Homer compares the regular appearance of an army, to " clouds that are ſettled on the " mountain-top, in the day of calmneſs, when " the ſtrength of the north wind ſleeps†." Oſſian, with full as much propriety, compares

* Iliad, iv. 275. † Iliad, v. 522.

the

the appearance of a diſordered army, to " the " mountain cloud, when the blaſt hath entered " its womb; and ſcatters the curling gloom " on every ſide." Oſſian's clouds aſſume a great many forms; and, as we might expect from his climate, are a fertile ſource of imagery to him. " The warriors followed their chiefs, " like the gathering of the rainy clouds, be- " hind the red meteors of heaven." An army retreating without coming to action, is likened to " clouds, that having long threatened rain, " retire ſlowly behind the hills." The picture of Oithona, after ſhe had determined to die, is lively and delicate. " Her ſoul was reſolved, " and the tear was dried from her wildly- " looking eye. A troubled joy roſe on her " mind, like the red path of the lightning on " a ſtormy cloud." The image alſo of the gloomy Cairbar, meditating, in ſilence, the aſſaſſination of Oſcar, until the moment came when his deſigns were ripe for execution, is extremely noble, and complete in all its parts. " Cairbar heard their words in ſilence, like " the cloud of a ſhower; it ſtands dark on " Cromla, till the lightning burſts its ſide. " The valley gleams with red light; the ſpirits " of the ſtorm rejoice. So ſtood the ſilent " king of Temora; at length his words are " heard."

Homer's compariſon of Achilles to the Dog-Star, is very ſublime. " Priam beheld him " ruſhing along the plain, ſhining in his ar- " mour, like the ſtar of autumn, bright are its

"beams, diſtinguiſhed amidſt the multitude of "ſtars in the dark hour of night. It riſes in "its ſplendor; but its ſplendor is fatal; be-"tokening to miſerable men, the deſtroying "heat*." The firſt appearance of Fingal, is, in like manner, compared by Oſſian, to a ſtar or meteor. "Fingal, tall in his ſhip, ſtretched "his bright lance before him. Terrible was "the gleam of his ſteel; it was like the green "meteor of death, ſetting in the heath of "Malmor, when the traveller is alone, and "the broad moon is darkened in heaven." The hero's appearance in Homer is more magnificent; in Oſſian, more terrible.

A tree cut down, or overthrown by a ſtorm, is a ſimilitude frequent among poets for deſcribing the fall of a warrior in battle. Homer employs it often. But the moſt beautiful, by far, of his compariſons, founded on this object, indeed one of the moſt beautiful in the whole Iliad, is that on the death of Euphorbus. "As the young and verdant olive, which a "man hath reared with care in a lonely field, "where the ſprings of water bubble around "it; it is fair and flouriſhing; it is fanned "by the breath of all the winds, and loaded "with white bloſſoms; when the ſudden blaſt "of a whirlwind deſcending, roots it out "from its bed, and ſtretches it on the duſt†." To this, elegant as it is, we may oppoſe the following ſimile of Oſſian's, relating to the death of the three ſons of Uſnoth. "They

* Iliad, xxii. 26. † Iliad, xvii. 53.

"fell,

" fell, like three young oaks which ſtood " alone on the hill. The traveller ſaw the " lovely trees, and wondered how they grew " ſo lonely. The blaſt of the deſert came by " night, and laid their green heads low. " Next day he returned; but they were " withered, and the heath was bare." Malvina's alluſion to the ſame object, in her lamentation over Oſcar, is ſo exquiſitely tender, that I cannot forbear giving it a place alſo. " I was a lovely tree in thy preſence, Oſcar! " with all my branches round me. But thy " death came, like a blaſt from the deſert, " and laid my green head low. The ſpring " returned with its ſhowers; but no leaf of " mine aroſe." Several of Oſſian's ſimiles taken from trees, are remarkably beautiful, and diverſified with well choſen circumſtances; ſuch as that upon the death of Ryno and Orla: " They have fallen like the oak of the deſert; " when it lies acroſs a ſtream, and withers in " the wind of the mountains:" Or that which Oſſian applies to himſelf; " I, like an ancient " oak in Morven, moulder alone in my place; " the blaſt hath lopped my branches away; " and I tremble at the wings of the north."

As Homer exalts his heroes by comparing them to gods, Oſſian makes the ſame uſe of compariſons taken from ſpirits and ghoſts. Swaran " roared in battle, like the ſhrill ſpirit " of a ſtorm that ſits dim on the clouds of " Gormal, and enjoys the death of the mari- " ner." His people gathered around Erra-

gon,

gon, " like ſtorms around the ghoſt of night, " when he calls them from the top of Mor- " ven, and prepares to pour them on the land " of the ſtranger."—" They fell before my " ſon, like groves in the deſert, when an " angry ghoſt ruſhes through night, and takes " their green heads in his hand." In ſuch images Oſſian appears in his ſtrength; for very ſeldom have ſupernatural beings been painted with ſo much ſublimity, and ſuch force of imagination, as by this poet. Even Homer, great as he is, muſt yield to him in ſimiles formed upon theſe. Take, for inſtance, the following, which is the moſt remarkable of this kind in the Iliad. " Meriones followed " Idomeneus to battle, like Mars the deſtroyer " of men, when he ruſhes to war. Terror, " his beloved ſon, ſtrong and fierce, attends " him; who fills with diſmay the moſt valiant " hero. They come from Thrace, armed " againſt the Ephyrians and Phlegyans; nor " do they regard the prayers of either; but " diſpoſe of ſucceſs at their will*." The idea here, is undoubtedly noble: but obſerve what a figure Oſſian ſets before the aſtoniſhed imagination, and with what ſublimely terrible circumſtances he has heightened it. " He ruſhed " in the ſound of his arms, like the dreadful " ſpirit of Loda; when he comes in the roar " of a thouſand ſtorms, and ſcatters battles " from his eyes. He ſits on a cloud over " Lochlin's ſeas. His mighty hand is on his

* Iliad, xiii. 298.

"sword. The winds lift his flaming locks. "So terrible was Cuthullin in the day of his "fame."

Homer's comparisons relate chiefly to martial subjects, to the appearances and motions of armies, the engagement and death of heroes, and the various incidents of war. In Ossian, we find a greater variety of other subjects illustrated by similes; particularly, the songs of bards, the beauty of women, the different circumstances of old age, sorrow, and private distress; which give occasion to much beautiful imagery. What, for instance, can be more delicate and moving, than the following simile of Oithona's, in her lamentation over the dishonour she had suffered? "Chief of Strumon," replied the sighing maid, "why didst thou "come over the dark-blue wave to Nuath's "mournful daughter? Why did not I pass "away in secret, like the flower of the rock, "that lifts its fair head unseen, and strews its "withered leaves on the blast?" The music of bards, a favourite object with Ossian, is illustrated by a variety of the most beautiful appearances that are to be found in nature. It is compared to the calm shower of spring; to the dews of the morning on the hill of roes; to the face of the blue and still lake. Two similes on this subject, I shall quote, because they would do honour to any of the most celebrated classics. The one is; "Sit thou on "the heath, O bard! and let us hear thy

" voice; it is pleaſant as the gale of the ſpring
" that ſighs on the hunter's ear, when he
" wakens from dreams of joy, and has heard
" the muſic of the ſpirits of the hill." The other contains a ſhort, but exquiſitely tender image, accompanied with the fineſt poetical painting. " The muſic of Carril was like the
" memory of joys that are paſt, pleaſant and
" mournful to the ſoul. The ghoſts of de-
" parted bards heard it from Slimora's ſide.
" Soft ſounds ſpread along the wood; and the
" ſilent valleys of night rejoice." What a figure would ſuch imagery and ſuch ſcenery have made, had they been preſented to us, adorned with the ſweetneſs and harmony of the Virgilian numbers!

I have choſen all along to compare Oſſian with Homer, rather than Virgil, for an obvious reaſon. There is a much nearer correſpondence between the times and manners of the two former poets. Both wrote in an early period of ſociety; both are originals; both are diſtinguiſhed by ſimplicity, ſublimity, and fire. The correct elegance of Virgil, his artful imitation of Homer, the Roman ſtatelineſs which he every where maintains, admit no parallel with the abrupt boldneſs, and enthuſiaſtic warmth of the Celtic bard. In one article indeed there is a reſemblance. Virgil is more tender than Homer; and thereby agrees more with Oſſian; with this difference, that the feelings of the one are more gentle and poliſhed,

liſhed, thoſe of the other more ſtrong; the tenderneſs of Virgil ſoftens, that of Oſſian diſſolves and overcomes the heart.

A reſemblance may be ſometimes obſerved between Oſſian's compariſons, and thoſe employed by the ſacred writers. They abound much in this figure, and they uſe it with the utmoſt propriety*. The imagery of Scripture exhibits a ſoil and climate altogether different from thoſe of Oſſian; a warmer country, a more ſmiling face of nature, the arts of agriculture and of rural life much farther advanced. The wine preſs, and the threſhing floor, are often preſented to us, the cedar and the palm tree, the fragrance of perfumes, the voice of the turtle, and the beds of lilies. The ſimiles are, like Oſſian's, generally ſhort, touching on one point of reſemblance, rather than ſpread out into little epiſodes. In the following example may be perceived what inexpreſſible grandeur poetry receives from the intervention of the Deity. "The nations ſhall ruſh like "the ruſhings of many waters; but God ſhall "rebuke them, and they ſhall fly far off, and "ſhall be chaſed as the chaff of the mountains "before the wind, and like the down of the "thiſtle before the whirlwind†."

Beſides formal compariſons, the poetry of Oſſian is embelliſhed with many beautiful metaphors: ſuch as that remarkably fine one applied to Deugala; "She was covered with

* See Dr. Lowth de Sacra Poëſi Hebræorum.

† Iſaiah, xvii. 13.

" the light of beauty; but her heart was the " house of pride." This mode of expression, which suppresses the mark of comparison, and substitutes a figured description in room of the object described, is a great enlivener of style. It denotes that glow and rapidity of fancy, which, without pausing to form a regular simile, paints the object at one stroke. " Thou " art to me the beam of the east, rising in a " land unknown." " In peace, thou art the " gale of spring; in war, the mountain storm." " Pleasant be thy rest, O lovely beam, soon " hast thou set on our hills! The steps of thy " departure were stately, like the moon on " the blue trembling wave. But thou hast " left us in darkness, first of the maids of Lu-" tha!—Soon hast thou set, Malvina! but thou " risest, like the beam of the east, among the " spirits of thy friends, where they sit in their " stormy halls, the chambers of the thunder." This is correct, and finely supported. But in the following instance, the metaphor, though very beautiful at the beginning, becomes imperfect before it closes, by being improperly mixed with the literal sense. " Trathal went " forth with the stream of his people; but " they met a rock; Fingal stood unmoved; " broken they rolled back from his side. Nor " did they roll in safety; the spear of the king " pursued their flight."

The hyperbole is a figure which we might expect to find often employed by Ossian; as the undisciplined imagination of early ages

 generally

generally prompts exaggeration, and carries its objects to excess; whereas longer experience, and farther progress in the arts of life, chasten men's ideas and expressions. Yet Ossian's hyperboles appear not to me, either so frequent or so harsh as might at first have been looked for; an advantage owing no doubt to the more cultivated state, in which, as was before shewn, poetry subsisted among the ancient Celtæ, than among most other barbarous nations. One of the most exaggerated descriptions in the whole work, is what meets us at the beginning of Fingal, where the scout makes his report to Cuthullin of the landing of the foe. But this is so far from deserving censure that it merits praise, as being, on that occasion, natural and proper. The scout arrives, trembling and full of fears; and it is well known, that no passion disposes men to hyperbolize more than terror. It both annihilates themselves in their own apprehension, and magnifies every object which they view through the medium of a troubled imagination. Hence all those indistinct images of formidable greatness, the natural marks of a disturbed and confused mind, which occur in Moran's description of Swaran's appearance, and in his relation of the conference which they held together; not unlike the report, which the affrighted Jewish spies made to their leader of the land of Canaan. "The land through "which we have gone to search it, is a land "that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and "all

"all the people that we ſaw in it, are men of "a great ſtature: and there ſaw we giants, "the ſons of Anak, which come of the giants; "and we were in our own ſight as graſshop-"pers, and ſo were we in their ſight*."

With regard to perſonifications, I formerly obſerved that Oſſian was ſparing, and I accounted for his being ſo. Allegorical perſonages he has none; and their abſence is not to be regretted. For the intermixture of thoſe ſhadowy beings, which have not the ſupport even of mythological or legendary belief, with human actors, ſeldom produces a good effect. The fiction becomes too viſible and phantaſtic; and overthows that impreſſion of reality, which the probable recital of human actions is calculated to make upon the mind. In the ſerious and pathetic ſcenes of Oſſian eſpecially, allegorical characters would have been as much out of place, as in tragedy; ſerving only unſeaſonably to amuſe the fancy, whilſt they ſtopped the current, and weakened the force of paſſion.

With apoſtrophes, or addreſſes to perſons abſent or dead, which have been, in all ages, the language of paſſion, our poet abounds; and they are among his higheſt beauties. Witneſs the apoſtrophe, in the firſt book of Fingal, to the maid of Iniſtore, whoſe lover had fallen in battle; and that inimitably fine one of Cuthullin to Bragela at the concluſion of the ſame book. He commands the harp to

* Numbers, xiii. 32, 33.

be

be ſtruck in her praiſe; and the mention of Bragela's name, immediately ſuggeſting to him a crowd of tender ideas; "Doſt thou raiſe thy "fair face from the rocks," he exclaims, "to "find the ſails of Cuthullin? The ſea is roll- "ing far diſtant, and its white foam ſhall de- "ceive thee for my ſails." And now his imagination being wrought up to conceive her as, at that moment, really in this ſituation, he becomes afraid of the harm ſhe may receive from the inclemency of the night; and with an enthuſiaſm, happy and affecting, though beyond the cautious ſtrain of modern poetry, "Retire," he proceeds, "retire, for it is night, "my love, and the dark winds ſigh in thy "hair. Retire to the hall of my feaſts, and "think of the times that are paſt; for I will "not return till the ſtorm of war has ceaſed. "O Connal, ſpeak of wars and arms, and ſend "her from my mind; for lovely with her "raven hair is the white-boſomed daughter "of Sorglan." This breathes all the native ſpirit of paſſion and tenderneſs.

The addreſſes to the ſun, to the moon, and to the evening ſtar, muſt draw the attention of every reader of taſte, as among the moſt ſplendid ornaments of this collection. The beauties of each are too great, and too obvious, to need any particular comment. In one paſ-ſage only of the addreſs to the moon, there appears ſome obſcurity. "Whither doſt thou "retire from thy courſe, when the darkneſs

" of thy countenance grows? Haſt thou thy
" hall like Oſſian? Dwelleſt thou in the
" ſhadow of grief? Have thy ſiſters fallen
" from heaven? Are they who rejoiced with
" thee at night, no more? Yes, they have
" fallen, fair light! and thou doſt often retire
" to mourn." We may be at a loſs to comprehend, at firſt view, the ground of theſe ſpeculations of Oſſian, concerning the moon; but when all the circumſtances are attended to, they will appear to flow naturally from the preſent ſituation of his mind. A mind under the dominion of any ſtrong paſſion, tinctures with its own diſpoſition, every object which it beholds. The old bard, with his heart bleeding for the loſs of all his friends, is meditating on the different phaſes of the moon. Her waning and darkneſs, preſents to his melancholy imagination, the image of ſorrow; and preſently the idea ariſes, and is indulged, that, like himſelf, ſhe retires to mourn over the loſs of other moons, or of ſtars, whom he calls her ſiſters, and fancies to have once rejoiced with her at night, now fallen from heaven. Darkneſs ſuggeſted the idea of mourning, and mourning ſuggeſted nothing ſo naturally to Oſſian, as the death of beloved friends. An inſtance preciſely ſimilar of this influence of paſſion, may be ſeen in a paſſage which has always been admired of Shakeſpeare's King Lear. The old man, on the point of diſtraction, through the

the inhumanity of his daughters, ſees Edgar appear diſguiſed like a beggar and a madman.

> *Lear.* Didſt thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?
> Couldeſt thou leave nothing? Didſt thou give them all?
> *Kent.* He hath no daughters, Sir.
> *Lear.* Death, traitor! nothing could have ſubdued nature
> To ſuch a lowneſs, but his unkind daughters.
>
> King Lear, Act 3. Scene 5.

The apoſtrophe to the winds, in the opening of Darthula, is in the higheſt ſpirit of poetry. "But the winds deceive thee, O "Darthula: and deny the woody Etha to thy "ſails. Theſe are not thy mountains, Na- "thos, nor is that the roar of thy climbing "waves. The halls of Cairbar are near, and "the towers of the foe lift their head.—Where "have ye been, ye ſouthern winds; when "the ſons of my love were deceived? But ye "have been ſporting on plains, and purſuing "the thiſtle's beard. O that ye had been "ruſtling in the ſails of Nathos, till the hills "of Etha roſe! till they roſe in their clouds, "and ſaw their coming chief." This paſſage is remarkable for the reſemblance it bears to an expoſtulation with the wood nymphs, on their abſence at a critical time; which, as a favourite poetical idea, Virgil has copied from Theocritus, and Milton has very happily imitated from both.

Where

Where were ye, nymphs! when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie;
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona, high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream *

Having now treated fully of Ossian's talents, with respect to description and imagery, it only remains to make some observations on his sentiments. No sentiments can be beautiful without being proper; that is, suited to the character and situation of those who utter them. In this respect, Ossian is as correct as most writers. His characters, as above observed, are in general well supported; which could not have been the case, had the sentiments been unnatural or out of place. A variety of personages of different ages, sexes, and conditions, are introduced into his poems; and they speak and act with a propriety of sentiment and behaviour, which it is surprising to find in so rude an age. Let the poem of Darthula, throughout, be taken as an example.

But it is not enough that sentiments be natural and proper. In order to acquire any high degree of poetical merit, they must also be sublime and pathetic.

* Milton's Lycidas. See Theocrit. Idyll. I.
Πᾶ ποκ' αρ' ἦσθ' ὀκα Δαφνις ἐτακετο; πᾶ πωκα, Νυμφαι, &c.
And Virg. Eclog. 10.
Quæ nemora, aut qui vos saltus habuere, puellæ, &c.

The

The ſublime is not confined to ſentiment alone. It belongs to deſcription alſo; and whether in deſcription or in ſentiment, imports ſuch ideas preſented to the mind, as to raiſe it to an uncommon degree of elevation, and fill it with admiration and aſtoniſhment. This is the higheſt effect either of eloquence or poetry; and to produce this effect, requires a genius glowing with the ſtrongeſt and warmeſt conception of ſome object awful, great, or magnificent. That this character of genius belongs to Oſſian, may, I think, ſufficiently appear from many of the paſſages I have already had occaſion to quote. To produce more inſtances were ſuperfluous. If the engagement of Fingal with the ſpirit of Loda, in Carric-thura; if the encounters of the armies, in Fingal; if the addreſs to the ſun, in Carthon; if the ſimiles founded upon ghoſts and ſpirits of the night; all formerly mentioned; be not admitted as examples, and illuſtrious ones too, of the true poetical ſublime, I confeſs myſelf entirely ignorant of this quality in writing.

All the circumſtances, indeed, of Oſſian's compoſition, are favourable to the ſublime, more perhaps than to any other ſpecies of beauty. Accuracy and correctneſs; artfully connected narration; exact method and proportion of parts; we may look for in poliſhed times. The gay and the beautiful will appear to more advantage in the midſt of ſmiling ſcenery and pleaſurable themes; but, amidſt

the rude ſcenes of nature, amidſt rocks and torrents and whirlwinds and battles, dwells the ſublime. It is the thunder and the lightning of genius. It is the offspring of nature, not of art. It is negligent of all the leſſer graces, and perfectly conſiſtent with a certain noble diſorder. It aſſociates naturally with that grave and ſolemn ſpirit which diſtinguiſhes our author. For the ſublime is an awful and ſerious emotion; and is heightened by all the images of Trouble, and Terror, and Darkneſs.

Ipſe pater, media nimborum in nocte, coruſcâ
Fulmina molitur dextrâ; quo maxima motu
Terra tremit; fugere feræ; & mortalia corda
Per gentes, humilis ſtravit pavor; ille, flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit.—— VIRG. Georg. I.

Simplicity and conciſeneſs, are never-failing characteriſtics of the ſtyle of a ſublime writer. He reſts on the majeſty of his ſentiments, not on the pomp of his expreſſions. The main ſecret of being ſublime, is to ſay great things in few, and in plain words: for every ſuperfluous decoration degrades a ſublime idea. The mind riſes and ſwells, when a lofty deſcription or ſentiment is preſented to it, in its native form. But no ſooner does the poet attempt to ſpread out this ſentiment or deſcription, and to deck it round and round with glittering ornaments, than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation; the tranſport is over; the beautiful may remain, but the ſublime is gone. Hence the conciſe and ſimple ſtyle of Oſſian

gives

gives great advantage to his ſublime conceptions; and aſſiſts them in ſeizing the imagination with full power *.

Sublimity as belonging to ſentiment, coincides in a great meaſure with magnanimity, heroiſm, and generoſity of ſentiment. Whatever diſcovers human nature in its greateſt elevation; whatever beſpeaks a high effort of ſoul; or ſhews a mind ſuperior to pleaſures, to dangers, and to death; forms what may be called the moral or ſentimental ſublime. For this Oſſian is eminently diſtinguiſhed. No poet maintains a higher tone of virtuous and noble ſentiment throughout all his works. Particularly in all the ſentiments of Fingal there is a grandeur and loftineſs proper to ſwell the mind

* The noted ſaying of Julius Cæſar, to the pilot in a ſtorm: "Quid times? Cæſarem vehis;" is magnanimous and ſublime. Lucan, not ſatisfied with this ſimple conciſeneſs, reſolved to amplify and improve the thought. Obſerve, how every time he twiſts it round, it departs farther from the ſublime, till, at laſt, it ends in tumid declamation.

Sperne minas, inquit, Pelagi, ventoque furenti
Trade ſinum. Italiam, ſi cœlo auctore, recuſas,
Me, pete. Sola tibi cauſa hæc eſt juſta timoris
Vectorem non noſſe tuum; quem numina nunquam
Deſtituunt; de quo male tunc fortuna meretur,
Cum poſt vota venit; medias perrumpe procellas
Tutelâ ſecure meâ. Cœli iſte fretique,
Non puppis noſtræ, labor eſt. Hanc Cæſare preſſam
A fluctu defendit onus.
——Quid tantâ ſtrage paratur,
Ignoras? Quærit pelagi cœlique tumultu
Quid præſtet fortuna mihi.——

PHARSAL. V. 578.

with

with the higheſt ideas of human perfection. Wherever he appears, we behold the hero. The objects which he purſues are always truly great; to bend the proud; to protect the injured; to defend his friends; to overcome his enemies by generoſity more than by force. A portion of the ſame ſpirit actuates all the other heroes. Valour reigns; but it is a generous valour, void of cruelty, animated by honour, not by hatred. We behold no debaſing paſſions among Fingal's warriors; no ſpirit of avarice or of inſult; but a perpetual contention for fame; a deſire of being diſtinguiſhed and remembered for gallant actions; a love of juſtice; and a zealous attachment to their friends and their country. Such is the ſtrain of ſentiment in the works of Oſſian.

But the ſublimity of moral ſentiments, if they wanted the ſoftening of the tender, would be in hazard of giving a hard and ſtiff air to poetry. It is not enough to admire. Admiration is a cold feeling, in compariſon of that deep intereſt which the heart takes in tender and pathetic ſcenes; where, by a myſterious attachment to the objects of compaſſion, we are pleaſed and delighted, even whilſt we mourn. With ſcenes of this kind Oſſian abounds; and his high merit in theſe is inconteſtible. He may be blamed for drawing tears too often from our eyes; but that he has the power of commanding them, I believe no man, who has the leaſt ſenſibility, will queſtion. The general character of his poetry, is the

the heroic mixed with the elegiac ſtrain; admiration tempered with pity. Ever fond of giving, as he expreſſes it, "the joy of grief," it is viſible, that, on all moving ſubjects, he delights to exert his genius; and accordingly, never were there finer pathetic ſituations, than what his works preſent. His great art in managing them lies in giving vent to the ſimple and natural emotions of the heart. We meet with no exaggerated declamation; no ſubtile refinements on ſorrow; no ſubſtitution of deſcription in place of paſſion. Oſſian felt ſtrongly himſelf; and the heart, when uttering its native language, never fails, by powerful ſympathy, to affect the heart. A great variety of examples might be produced. We need only open the book to find them every where. What, for inſtance, can be more moving than the lamentations of Oithona, after her misfortune? Gaul, the ſon of Morni, her lover, ignorant of what ſhe had ſuffered, comes to her reſcue. Their meeting is tender in the higheſt degree. He propoſes to engage her foe, in ſingle combat, and gives her in charge what ſhe is to do, if he himſelf ſhall fall. "And ſhall the daughter of Nuäth "live?" ſhe replied, with a burſting ſigh. "Shall I live in Tromathon, and the ſon of "Morni low? My heart is not of that rock; "nor my ſoul careleſs as that ſea, which lifts its "blue waves to every wind, and rolls beneath "the ſtorm. The blaſt, which ſhall lay thee "low, ſhall ſpread the branches of Oithona on

"earth.

"earth. We ſhall wither together, ſon of "car-borne Morni! The narrow houſe is "pleaſant to me, and the grey ſtone of the "dead; for never more will I leave thy "rocks, ſea-ſurrounded Tromathon!—Chief "of Strumon, why cameſt thou over the "waves to Nuäth's mournful daughter? Why "did not I paſs away in ſecret, like the flower "of the rock, that lifts its fair head unſeen, "and ſtrews its withered leaves on the blaſt? "Why didſt thou come, O Gaul! to hear my "departing ſigh?—O had I dwelt at Duvran-"na, in the bright beams of my fame! Then "had my years come on with joy; and the "virgins would bleſs my ſteps. But I fall in "youth, ſon of Morni, and my father ſhall "bluſh in his hall."

Oithona mourns like a woman; in Cuthullin's expreſſions of grief after his defeat, we behold the ſentiments of a hero, generous but deſponding. The ſituation is remarkably fine. Cuthullin, rouſed from his cave, by the noiſe of battle, ſees Fingal victorious in the field. He is deſcribed as kindling at the ſight. "His "hand is on the ſword of his fathers; his "red-rolling eyes on the foe. He thrice at-"tempted to ruſh to battle; and thrice did "Connal ſtop him;" ſuggeſting that Fingal was routing the foe; and that he ought not, by the ſhew of ſuperfluous aid, to deprive the king of any part of the honour of a victory, which was owing to him alone. Cuthullin yields to this generous ſentiment; but we ſee it

it ſtinging him to the heart with the ſenſe of his own diſgrace. " Then, Carril, go," replied the chief, " and greet the king of Mor-" ven. When Lochlin falls away like a " ſtream after rain, and the noiſe of the bat-" tle is over, then be thy voice ſweet in his " ear, to praiſe the king of ſwords. Give " him the ſword of Caithbat; for Cuthullin is " worthy no more to lift the arms of his " fathers. But, O ye ghoſts of the lonely " Cromla! Ye ſouls of chiefs that are no " more! Be ye the companions of Cuthul-" lin, and talk to him in the cave of his ſor-" row. For never more ſhall I be renowned " among the mighty in the land. I am like " a beam that has ſhone: like a miſt that has " fled away; when the blaſt of the morning " came, and brightened the ſhaggy ſide of " the hill. Connal! talk of arms no more: " departed is my fame. My ſighs ſhall be on " Cromla's wind; till my footſteps ceaſe to " be ſeen. And thou, white-boſomed Bragela! " mourn over the fall of my fame; for van-" quiſhed, I will never return to thee, thou " ſun-beam of Dun-ſcaich!"

——Æſtuat ingens
Uno in corde pudor, luctuſque, & conſcia virtus.

Beſides ſuch extended pathetic ſcenes, Oſſian frequently pierces the heart by a ſingle unexpected ſtroke. When Oſcar fell in battle, " No father mourned his ſon ſlain in youth;

" no brother, his brother of love; they fell " without tears, for the chief of the people " was low." In the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the sixth Iliad, the circumstance of the child in his nurse's arms, has often been remarked, as adding much to the tenderness of the scene. In the following passage relating to the death of Cuthullin, we find a circumstance that must strike the imagination with still greater force. " And " is the son of Semo fallen?" said Carril with a sigh. " Mournful are Tura's walls, and " sorrow dwells at Dunscaich. Thy spouse is " left alone in her youth; the son of thy love " is alone. He shall come to Bragela, and " ask her why she weeps. He shall lift his " eyes to the wall, and see his father's sword. " Whose sword is that? he will say; and the " soul of his mother is sad." Soon after Fingal had shewn all the grief of a father's heart for Ryno, one of his sons fallen in battle, he is calling, after his accustomed manner, his sons to the chase. " Call," says he, " Fillan " and Ryno—But he is not here—My son " rests on the bed of death." This unexpected start of anguish is worthy of the highest tragic poet,

If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife—
My wife!—my wife—What wife?—I have no wife—
Oh, insupportable! Oh, heavy hour!

Othello, Act 5. Scene 7.

The

The contrivance of the incident in both poets is ſimilar; but the circumſtances are varied with judgment. Othello dwells upon the name of wife, when it had fallen from him, with the confuſion and horror of one tortured with guilt. Fingal, with the dignity of a hero, corrects himſelf, and ſuppreſſes his riſing grief.

The contraſt which Oſſian frequently makes between his preſent and his former ſtate, diffuſes over his whole poetry, a ſolemn pathetic air, which cannot fail to make impreſſion on every heart. The concluſion of the ſongs of Selma is particularly calculated for this purpoſe. Nothing can be more poetical and tender, or can leave upon the mind a ſtronger and more affecting idea of the venerable aged bard. "Such were the words of the "bards in the days of the ſong; when the "king heard the muſic of harps, and the "tales of other times. The chiefs gathered "from all their hills, and heard the lovely "ſound. They praiſed the voice of Cona*; "the firſt among a thouſand bards. But "age is now on my tongue, and my ſoul "has failed. I hear, ſometimes, the ghoſts "of bards, and learn their pleaſant ſong. "But memory fails on my mind; I hear "the call of years. They ſay, as they paſs "along, Why does Oſſian ſing? Soon ſhall

* Oſſian himſelf is poetically called the voice of Cona.

" he lie in the narrow houſe, and no bard " ſhall raiſe his fame. Roll on, ye dark-" brown years! for ye bring no joy in your " courſe. Let the tomb open to Oſſian, " for his ſtrength has failed. The ſons of " the ſong are gone to reſt. My voice re-" mains like a blaſt that roars lonely on a " ſea-ſurrounded rock, after the winds are " laid. The dark moſs whiſtles there, and " the diſtant mariner ſees the waving trees."

Upon the whole; if to feel ſtrongly, and to deſcribe naturally, be the two chief ingredients in poetical genius, Oſſian muſt, after fair examination, be held to poſſeſs that genius in a high degree. The queſtion is not, whether a few improprieties may be pointed out in his works; whether this or that paſſage might not have been worked up with more art and ſkill, by ſome writer of happier times? A thouſand ſuch cold and frivolous criticiſms, are altogether indeciſive as to his genuine merit. But, has he the ſpirit, the fire, the inſpiration, of a poet? Does he utter the voice of nature? Does he elevate by his ſentiments? Does he intereſt by his deſcriptions? Does he paint to the heart as well as to the fancy? Does he make his readers glow, and tremble, and weep? Theſe are the great characteriſtics of true poetry. Where theſe are found, he muſt be a minute critic indeed, who can dwell upon ſlight defects. A few beauties of this high kind, tranſcend

whole volumes of faultlefs mediocrity. Uncouth and abrupt Offian may fometimes appear by reafon of his concifenefs. But he is fublime, he is pathetic, in an eminent degree. If he has not the extenfive knowledge, the regular dignity of narration, the fulnefs and accuracy of defcription, which we find in Homer and Virgil, yet in ftrength of imagination, in grandeur of fentiment, in native majefty of paffion, he is fully their equal. If he flows not always like a clear ftream, yet he breaks forth often like a torrent of fire. Of art too, he is far from being deftitute; and his imagination is remarkable for delicacy as well as ftrength. Seldom or never is he either trifling or tedious; and if he be thought too melancholy, yet he is always moral. Though his merit were in other refpects much lefs than it is, this alone ought to entitle him to high regard, that his writings are remarkably favourable to virtue. They awake the tendereft fympathies, and infpire the moft generous emotions. No reader can rife from him without being warmed with the fentiments of humanity, virtue, and honour.

Though unacquainted with the original language, there is no one but muft judge the tranflation to deferve the higheft praife, on account of its beauty and elegance. Of its faithfulnefs and accuracy, I have been affured by perfons fkilled in the Galic tongue,

who, from their youth, were acquainted with many of these poems of Ossian. To transfuse such spirited and fervid ideas from one language into another; to translate literally, and yet with such a glow of poetry; to keep alive so much passion, and support so much dignity throughout, is one of the most difficult works of genius, and proves the translator to have been animated with no small portion of Ossian's spirit.

The measured prose which he has employed, possesses considerable advantages above any sort of versification he could have chosen. Whilst it pleases and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences, being, at the same time, freer from constraint in the choice and arrangement of words, it allows the spirit of the original to be exhibited with more justness, force, and simplicity. Elegant, however, and masterly as Mr. Macpherson's translation is, we must never forget, whilst we read it, that we are putting the merit of the original to a severe test. For, we are examining a poet stripped of his native dress; divested of the harmony of his own numbers. We know how much grace and energy the works of the Greek and Latin poets receive from the charm of versification in their original languages. If then, destitute of this advantage, exhibited in a literal version, Ossian still has power to please as a poet; and not to please only, but often to command,

mand, to tranſport, to melt, the heart; we may very ſafely infer, that his productions are the offspring of true and uncommon genius; and we may boldly aſſign him a place among thoſe whoſe works are to laſt for ages.

FINIS.